



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

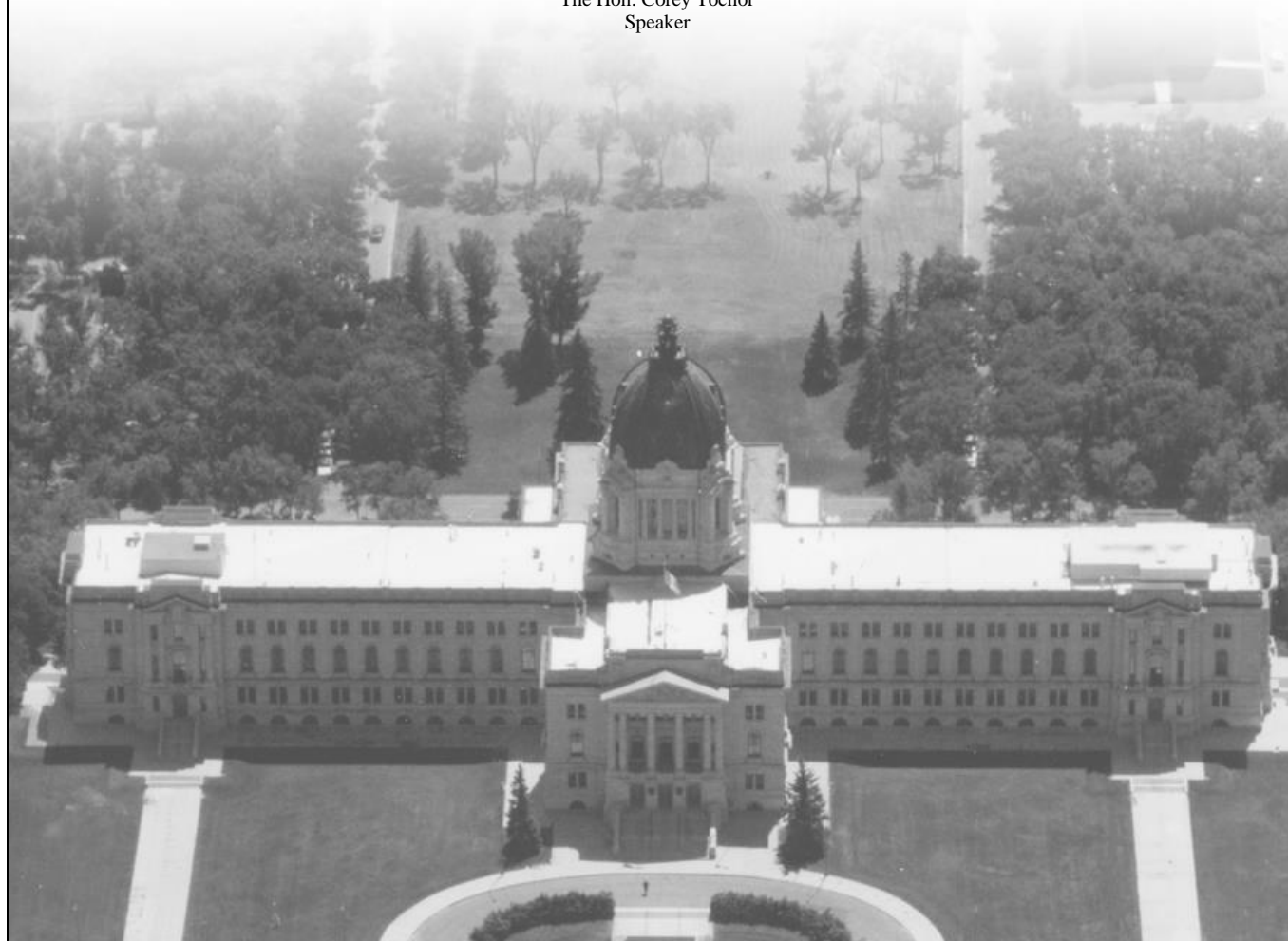
of the

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

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Congratulations to Clerk on 30 Years of Service

The Speaker: — For the past 30 years, our Assembly has been well served by an individual that needs recognition today. He celebrated on, I believe, April the 1st, 30 years of service to the Legislative Assembly Service: Greg Putz. Would everyone please congratulate him on 30 years of service.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, today I would like to welcome a grade 11 and 12 class from Carry The Kettle First Nation, very close to my hometown of Wolesey. And I'd like to welcome them here today to their Assembly. They're here with Mr. Chad O'Watch, the teacher; and the students, Denzal Rope, Walter Ryder, Marissa Thomson, Kendra Thomson, and Austin Adams.

I look forward to meeting with them a little bit later today and we'll discuss a little bit more about politics and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, and the members opposite have agreed to buy you ice cream. So we're looking forward to meeting with you later. So I'd ask all members to help me welcome them to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Moosomin in welcoming the Carry The Kettle students. And as one of the few Aboriginal members of the Assembly, I want to say to them in my Cree language:

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

And to point out that you're the best and don't ever think that the place for the Aboriginal people does not involve the Legislative Assembly because I'm here and many of you will be here in the future. So keep up your studies and good luck, and I'm glad you came to visit us here today. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — Just barely, I'll recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for your indulgence on the clock. I'd just like to introduce a group seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about some workers from the Palliser Regional Library, Mr. Speaker. And we're joined today by Wendy Robbins, 25 years of service at Palliser; Melissa Silzer-Frank, 17 years of service; Hugh

Armstrong, 10 months; Dale Maier, 8 years of service, Mr. Speaker; Jody Arnold, 10 years of service; and Linda Peters, 20 years working at the Palliser Regional Library, Mr. Speaker. They're joined by the president of CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] Local 9, Stacey Landin.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're here concerned about the future of libraries in the province of Saskatchewan. So if all members could join me in welcoming, and thanking, these individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming these individuals to the Assembly today. Sometimes we hear divergent views on a lot of topics. I suspect we're going to hear one later today. But nonetheless, regardless of what happens, people in our library systems, people in our schools do great work. They make our province a better place and we thank them and want to very much welcome them to the legislature on behalf of the members on this side of the House.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Nerlien: — 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. I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Kelvington, Glaslyn, Nut Mountain, Archerwill, Weekes, Porcupine Plain, Rose Valley, Fosston, and Quill Lake. I do so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly opposing the Sask Party's cuts to spiritual care. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners believe and point out that this government clearly does not understand the work of or the impact of professional spiritual care providers in our hospitals, Mr. Speaker; that they point out that in the 2017-18 budget, the Sask Party eliminated all funding for pastoral care services, which provided spiritual care within health facilities, Mr. Speaker; that Saskatchewan will be the only province within Canada to not fund this support for patients, residents, and their families seeking wellness; that the Sask Party did not share their plan to scrap funding for spiritual care within health region facilities during the 2016 election.

The petitioners also point out that spiritual care responds to the spiritual and emotional needs of patients and residents and provides a compassionate listening presence in times of crisis. They point out that spiritual care supports families, patients, and residents in making difficult decisions, and that spiritual care can provide support for all families, patients, and residents, regardless of faith or belief, in obtaining comfort and support.

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 immediately reinstate the funding for pastoral care services in this province's health region facilities.

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in my place once again today to present a petition in support of the member from Prince Albert Northcote in fighting, in struggling to get a second bridge built for Prince Albert, and that the need for the second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and the businesses that send people and products to Prince Albert require a solution. So:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, ask that the Sask Party government stop stalling, hiding behind rhetoric, and refusing to listen to the people calling for action, and begin immediately to join and then plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert, using federal and provincial dollars as being called for by the various people throughout the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we've done day in and day out, and petition page after petition page, I'm very proud to stand in my place to present yet another page with names of people that have signed this petition. And the page that I am presenting today are primarily from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, once again I am rising to present a petition opposed to Bill 40 and a potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The people who signed the petition would like 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's Crown corporations returned \$297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. As we know, over the last 10 years we have received over \$3 billion in dividends from our Crown, Mr. Speaker. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors.

And we know that our Crown corporations employ thousands of Saskatchewan people across the province and that under section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* of Canada, Crown corporations are

exempt from corporate income tax, provided not less than 90 per cent of the shares are held by a government or province. So the Sask Party's proposal would allow up to 49 per cent of a Crown to be sold without being considered privatized. So this short-sighted legislation risks sending millions of Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than to the people of Saskatchewan.

So, 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 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 individuals who have signed this petition today are from the city of Saskatoon. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition from citizens concerned about libraries in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: whereas the Saskatchewan government has cut funding for regional libraries in half or by \$3.5 million and has eliminated funding, in part, for libraries in Regina and Saskatoon, that this drastic funding cut will have a devastating impact on libraries, especially regional libraries and the many people who depend on them.

Mr. Speaker, they point out that libraries are about more than just borrowing books. They point out the meeting rooms that are used by community groups, library staff hosting education programs and clubs, the publicly accessible computer terminals that are essential to many. They point out that there are services for seniors, children, employment supports, language and reading groups, citizen test preparation, and help for newcomers to build their resumé's. They point out that these cuts will have a disproportionate impact on rural communities where libraries are vital community spaces, Mr. Speaker. They point out that potential closures or reduction in services will severely impact our communities, all of our communities, Mr. Speaker.

In the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan renew its commitment to the invaluable programming, education opportunities, and public spaces our libraries provide across this province and to restore the \$4.8 million in funding for public libraries that was cut in the 2017-2018 budget.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition — and I know that my colleagues, in particular the member from Lakeview, have presented other iterations of this petition, Mr. Speaker — but this particular petition is signed by citizens from the city of Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to

present a petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic violence. Saskatchewan has the very dubious distinction, Mr. Speaker, of having the highest rate of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces.

One in three Canadian workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many of them the violence will follow them to work. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. And, Mr. Speaker, 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 the petition today come from Moose Jaw. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Artists Celebrated at Juno Awards

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The 2017 Juno Awards were held this past weekend, and I'm proud to say that there was an abundance of local Saskatchewan artists being celebrated for their contributions to Canadian music and culture.

Langenburg's Jess Moskaluke was the big winner of the night, taking home Country Album of the Year with her album, *Kiss Me Quiet*. Regina's Andy Shauf picked up four Juno nominations including Breakthrough Artist of the Year for his 2016 album, *The Party*, and Regina's Colin James was also nominated for Blues Album of the Year for his album, *Blue Highways*.

Folk duo Kacy & Clayton were nominated for Contemporary Roots Album of the Year with their record, *Strange Country*. And, Mr. Speaker, this duo is well known to folks in my area. They're from the Fir Mountain hills. Their ranch is in Fir Mountain, and you can basically see the hills from our farm. So I've known their parents for a long time and am very pleased to see this couple, duo, doing so well.

And finally, four of my very good friends: Eric Wright, Ben Plotnick, Trent Freeman, and Karrnel Sawitsky from the group called The Fretless, they won a Juno for Instrumental Album of the Year for their album, *Bird's Nest*.

Karrnel, in particular, is from Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, he was pursuing a musical career here with his wife, Amy Matysio, who was pursuing a film and acting career, but when the film tax credit was cancelled in Saskatchewan they had to move to Toronto. So not only is Amy missed in the acting

community, but we sure miss Karrnel here in Saskatchewan as well.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me today in congratulating Saskatchewan's Juno nominees and award winners, and in thanking them for making our province a little brighter with their contributions to our local arts and culture. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Canadians and music fans from around the world were glued to their TVs last night watching the 2017 Juno Awards hosted in our nation's capital. Not only was the show fantastic, featuring some of Canada's greatest musical talents, but the hosts, Bryan Adams and Russel Peters, kept viewers laughing.

Mr. Speaker, we all have examples of extraordinary talent that comes from each of our constituencies, but last night one of the big winners hails from Langenburg. Jess Moskaluke won the Country Album of the Year, one of the most coveted Junos. This award has been previously won by well-known artists such as Johnny Reid, Terri Clark, and Dallas Smith. Jess's album, *Kiss Me Quiet*, has won international acclaim and was a deserving fit for album of the year.

Not only did she take a Juno award home, she also took a number of major awards this past weekend at the Saskatchewan Country Music Association Awards, including Single of the Year. With all the lights, fireworks, and Canadian talent, Jess said winning this award was one of the "coolest things" she has ever done.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of great Saskatchewan and Canadian talent that is succeeding on the world stage. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating all the nominees and winners at this year's Juno Awards, and specifically congratulate Jess Moskaluke on her big win last night, and wishing her all the best in her future endeavours in her musical career. Thank you.

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

Fundraising Efforts in Saskatchewan Raise Autism Awareness

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the international day for autism awareness. About 1 per cent of the world population has autism spectrum disorder, but despite the high rates of autism in regions around the world, stigmatization and discrimination associated with neurological differences has had a tremendous impact on individuals with autism. This is why autism awareness is so desperately needed.

Here in Canada there are some great organizations and people who work to promote awareness and acceptance of autism. In fact I'm proud to say that today marks the official launch of the Inside Out for Autism campaign across Canada. In

Saskatchewan this campaign is being run by local autism support group SaskFEAT [Saskatchewan Families for Effective Autism Treatment], in conjunction with Autism Canada. That campaign raises awareness, acceptance, and funds for people on the autism spectrum.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is doing a great job of promoting this event. Here in Saskatchewan, Canada's top fundraisers Katie and Landon Emde from Midale, along with their six-year-old son, Avery, who is on the autism spectrum, have raised over \$1,400. Most of those proceeds will stay here in Saskatchewan and go towards front-line services.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me in thanking our local organizations like SaskFEAT and campaigns like Inside Out for Autism and people like Katie and Landon that help in dispelling the stigma around autism, raise awareness, and support people on the autism spectrum as they strive to live full, meaningful lives. Thank you.

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

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to draw attention to an important awareness today. Today is Inside Out for Autism. Mr. Speaker, across the country, thousands have joined together to wear their shirts, tops, or sweaters inside out. This simple act is a powerful representation of how those with autism are no different than the rest of us, and their differences are not a weakness.

This awareness today is important for many that have autism, and I would like to highlight a constituent who not only has drawn awareness to autism, but has also raised money for autism research. Berney Weston is a 10-year-old boy from my part of the province that wanted to do something to make his friend, Chayce, feel more comfortable. You see, Mr. Speaker, Chayce has autism, and Berney and Chayce's friendship demonstrates that a few differences isn't a bad thing. Berney has worked with Chayce's parents and organized a fundraiser based on their favourite thing: hockey. They raised \$11,000 for Chayce's foundation on pledges based on Berney's favourite player, Edmonton Oiler Cam Talbot, and how many saves he would make in the game.

Mr. Speaker, the fundraiser was amazing, and I would ask all the members to join me in congratulating Berney and Chayce and all the organizers on a successful fundraiser. They're helping bring awareness to autism and Inside Out Day. Thank you.

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

Kelvington-Wadena is Home of Champions

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, confirming that Kelvington-Wadena constituency is once again the home of champions, I have two that are front of mind today. Team Syrota of the Wadena Curling Club, including skip Delores Syrota with Bev Krasowski, Donna Liebrecht, and Sylvia Broad, defeated Team Leach of Regina with a 6-2 win at the Saskatchewan Masters Curling Championship. They will represent Saskatchewan at the 2017 Canadian Masters

Women's Championship this week in Guelph.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, working together to create a better, stronger Saskatchewan has been evident in Porcupine Plain, Kelvington, Rose Valley, and surrounding area. Before the 2016-17 hockey season even began, hopes to have a bantam team were very dim for these communities. With many calls and negotiating between the communities made, the PKRV [Porcupine Plain, Kelvington, Rose Valley] Bantam Blues hockey team was formed.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the PKRV Bantam Blues and their coaches on a great season. Not only did they take the provincial bantam C championship on March 26th, but two days later, in league final play, they beat the Tisdale Ramblers to take the title of North East Minor Hockey League champions.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the PKRV bantam hockey team on their provincial championship, and wish Team Syrota the best of luck at the Masters women's championships in Guelph this week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Melfort Senior Girls' Team Wins Gold at Hoopla

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With pride, I congratulate the Melfort Comet senior girls' basketball team on winning the program's first-ever gold medal at Hoopla on March 25th. They defeated three-time champion Moose Jaw Peacocks 64-42 in the final championship. Head coach Kelly Linnell could not be prouder of this team, and is excited that this long-awaited provincial title has finally come to a reality.

Mr. Speaker, though nervous in the first quarter, their team found their confidence quickly, giving their fans and families an entertaining game to watch and be part of through their vocal support.

The Comets gained control very quickly, as they secured a 13-point lead at halftime. Rachel Linnell led the team with 16 points as well as 10 rebounds. Her teammate Keely Hangs-Copeland had 8 rebounds, supporting their strong defence.

What separates this team from the rest is their friendships both on and off the court, making the first-ever gold-medal victory surely unforgettable. Their win is not just for the Comets basketball program, but it is for the community of Melfort and the surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating the Melfort Comets senior girls' basketball team, along with their coaching staff, families, and community, on their first-ever gold-medal title at Hoopla. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Schools Opening in Regina

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to highlight this government's commitment to our

education system with the completion of two new schools in my constituency. École Harbour Landing, Regina Public; and école Kateri Tekakwitha, Regina Catholic are two new schools in Harbour Landing. They are both wonderful facilities and will be home for 1,000 students and 90 daycare spaces when they open in September.

Harbour Landing is a growing community, Mr. Speaker. Since last January, there have been over 650 new housing starts. Many of these new homes will be filled by young families, and they will benefit greatly from access to daycare and education facilities right in their neighbourhood. Schools surrounding these two new schools will also see benefit from reduced class sizes and less strain on resources.

I am proud of this government's record when it comes to education. Our record is one of opening 40 new schools, including 21 this year, along with 25 major renovations, while the NDP's [New Democratic Party] record was closing 176, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is meeting the challenges and will continue to make sure that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Regina Bypass Project

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Governing is all about taking responsibility, and budgeting is all about choices. Well that government refuses at every turn to accept responsibility, and they're choosing to make Saskatchewan people pay for Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Mr. Speaker, in a budget full of callous cuts and billions of dollars in tax hikes, they still found some money for the Premier to offer special deals to his corporate buddies, and there's a \$500 million fund set aside for a foreign company that they handed the Regina bypass contract to. Half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, for 50 kilometres of road.

And, Mr. Speaker, how can the Saskatchewan Party ask Saskatchewan families to pay more for just about everything — to give up STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], the libraries, the care programs, and the list goes on — just so the Saskatchewan Party can make good on their backroom contract with the conglomerate marred by scandal? How could they do that to the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know where they sit around in the backroom and dream up this sense of outrage that they've got. Look on the Internet. They can see what the documents are. They can see where the transaction is. They can see how it changed from one small interchange to an entire city bypass. Mr. Speaker, the total cost of the Regina bypass is \$1.2 billion. There's \$600 million in a 30-year maintenance program that would not be an upfront cost in previous agreements.

The cost breakdown is for each type of procurement — traditional: payments to the private sector, 1.646 billion; ancillary costs, 89 million; retained risk, 476 million; competitive neutrality adjustment, Mr. Speaker. All of that is online. So the total cost if we did a traditional build would be \$2.261 billion for the total cost of 1.2 that we've done, Mr. Speaker. We'll make no apologies for this.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, 99 per cent of the things they put on the Internet is blacked out, Mr. Speaker. And the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know. They won't tell us what they're paying for dirt. They won't tell us what they're paying for asphalt, but we do know a full 60 per cent of the highways budget was spent on the bypass.

Meanwhile, the other 99.6 per cent of our 26 000 kilometres of provincial road are left with the scraps, and the Sask Party are slashing funding for strategic municipal infrastructure. And our roads, Mr. Speaker, are really important all throughout the province.

But since they say everything is on the table, and they put so much of what Saskatchewan families rely on on the chopping block, will the minister at least tell us what options are available in the contract with Vinci to stop the hemorrhaging of money and get control of this bypass back into Saskatchewan hands?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, this project, by building it as a P3 process, saved \$380 million or 17 per cent. There are 11,300 estimated jobs that will be created through the entirety of the project. Seventy-one per cent of the businesses engaged are local — 95 local businesses, Mr. Speaker. There's a 1,400-page contract online available to the public.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite don't like to see things. They don't like to know things. What I'd like to do is ask them to go out and meet with the families of people that have been killed or hurt in accidents on the east side of the city. I'd like them to go out and talk to people about the safety that's going to come as a result of this bypass. I'd like them to come and see how traffic flows might work when it's finished. As it's getting closer and closer to being finished, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are realizing how wrong they are on this project. And Mr. Speaker, I'd urge them to change their mind well before the next election.

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

Auditor's Report and Financial Support for Municipalities

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, in their own budget promotional material, they said that they are investing in their priorities. Mr. Speaker, a billion-dollar tax hike to Saskatchewan families and half a billion-dollar cheque to a conglomerate from France. Is the Sask Party covering Vinci's tab for their court cases in Qatar and elsewhere?

[14:00]

And, Mr. Speaker, what about, what about the Sask Party's GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal? Eleven million taxpayer dollars made it into the pockets of two Sask Party supporters. But in this budget the Sask Party took that same amount, \$11 million, from the people of Regina, and they took \$11 million from the people of Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, since he has not yet spoken out about the GTH scandal, can the Minister of Finance tell us why his priority is to hand \$11 million over to two Sask Party supporters instead of the people of our two largest cities?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The premise of the question is of course absurd. The auditor has looked into this matter fully. The auditor has done a very thorough job with the full co-operation of this side of the House. The auditor looked into literally hundreds if not thousands of documents pertaining to the matter. The auditor spoke to all of the individuals who were involved. The auditor made a number of recommendations. We accept those recommendations. We're implementing or have implemented all of those recommendations, Mr. Speaker. And I would just quote the auditor who said in an open-line show:

In any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags. And because this is a land transaction we did look for conflicts of interest. We didn't find evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of our work, so there were no red flags there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, no answer from that Minister of Finance. We're talking about the people of Saskatchewan's money and they deserve answers about these handouts. But this government has a problem with being upfront. Saskatchewan cities and towns are busy making their own budgets, but they were blindsided by the Sask Party's announcement that they would just stop paying the grants-in-lieu funding they'd been counting on for decades. Saying everything is on the table is not consultation, not by a mile, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of last week, in an attempt to dig themselves out from under all the backlash, the Sask Party blurted out that they'd capped the cuts for some municipalities. Well some communities are breathing easier, but what of the other hundreds of our cities and towns that are still starving from the Sask Party cut? What is the minister going to do to support the rest of our municipal partners, and how can she justify saving some but not others?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week we did make an announcement that we would ensure that the cities that do receive the grants-in-lieu that aren't grants-in-lieu as we think of paying for property tax, but a

different program, that they wouldn't be disproportionately impacted. However if that member opposite is truly interested in the programs and fairness, why is it that only certain cities got any funding through these programs, whereas the city of Lloydminster, Warman, Martensville, and Meadow Lake got nothing, zero?

I looked at a map over the weekend, Mr. Speaker, and I looked in my own constituency. And if you go down the Highway 16, the town of Colonsay gets something from this program but Viscount does not. Then you see Guernsey, nothing. Then Lanigan, oh they get something from this program. Kindersley got funds from this program and Rosetown, but not Davidson, Kenaston, or Outlook.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very convoluted which communities qualified for this and which did not. It was an unfair, unpredictable, complex program.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the minister can try to square the circle all she wants, but this constant downloading on our municipal partners across this province is hurting all Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, a cut is a cut is a cut. And a tax hike is a tax hike is a tax hike.

Mr. Speaker, that Sask Party are forcing Saskatchewan people to pay more and get less, and they're burning relationships with the cities and towns who should be a provincial government's partners. Regina Mayor Michael Fougere said if city council was forced to raise taxes as a result of the grants-in-lieu cut, they would make sure people know why. He says they will add a "provincial levy" line on their notice.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Sask Party come clean and admit that by targeting our cities and towns, the Sask Party's targeting and hurting Saskatchewan families?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — This is very rich coming from a member who supports a party that, when in government, there was very little revenue sharing and it certainly wasn't predictable.

I have a news release here, Mr. Speaker, from 2006 where it was announced that there would be a \$10 million increase in revenue sharing starting in the next fiscal year for a total of — are you ready, Mr. Speaker? — 95 million. Nobody knew how much they were getting, but there would be 95 million available.

Well you know what's available in municipal revenue sharing now, Mr. Speaker — and it's predictable — is 257 million, Mr. Speaker. That's more than two and a half times as much as what was there with the NDP. The NDP, they had to guess from year over year.

That's just one proponent of what goes to our urban centres, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about infrastructure and the billions of

dollars that this government has invested in infrastructure to backfill the fact that they absolutely ignored it when they had the NDP government. And, Mr. Speaker, that is all spent in our urban centres to help with their infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we have supported our municipal partners year over year over year.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Funding for Libraries

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party can tie itself in knots trying to explain these cuts, but we'll take the word of the hard-working people on the front line over theirs any time, Mr. Speaker.

We're joined here today by six workers from the Palliser Regional Library who have been laid off as a result of this government's short-sighted attack on libraries. These six individuals, Mr. Speaker, represent 80-plus years of service, Mr. Speaker.

Palliser Regional Library officials say they may not be able to support Saskatchewan rural library branches and has already had to slash services, including programming for kids. We know this is just the fallout from the cuts to one region, Mr. Speaker, and other job losses will certainly be coming. So how can the minister justify putting these devoted employees out of work and denying Saskatchewan people from the valuable services that they provide?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We always want to offer sympathy and be very mindful whenever there is something that impacts people's employment. It's something that's not taken lightly by this government. However we are in some changing economic times, and there's no doubt there's going to be some changes that are there.

Mr. Speaker, it's incorrect to talk about some of the numbers the members were referring to there. The members referred to 58 per cent cut. In fact the provincial reduction is actually 16 per cent of Palliser's budget. They are still receiving \$286,000 per year from the budget from the province. Last year's total budget was \$2.44 million. So, Mr. Speaker, they've got a significant number of reserves.

We want to continue to work with all of the regional libraries in the province, find out if there's better ways we can work to continue to deliver service, maintain employment, and, Mr. Speaker, our overwhelming concern is trying to do the best for the citizens of our province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, let me try and break this down as simply as I can for the minister opposite. Tomorrow's the year anniversary of the election that took place in this province, Mr. Speaker, when that party of course ran on keeping Saskatchewan strong.

The whole question of cutting libraries, Mr. Speaker, was precisely nowhere in their campaign. And yet he has the gall to stand here today and try to explain away the fact that these six hard-working employees at the Palliser Regional Library, who have 80-plus years of service amongst them, Mr. Speaker, that this is somehow rebalancing reserves. Or, you know, he wants to play the numbers game.

The numbers are this, Mr. Speaker: six employees, 80-plus years of service, been sandbagged by this government when it came to their attack on libraries. So my question to the minister is this: can he stand and apologize to those workers for expecting better from this government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to talk about numbers. In Saskatchewan we have roughly 4,000 people per library; in Alberta, approximately 14,000; in Manitoba, 10,000 per library. Mr. Speaker, we have to do a better job of ensuring that we deliver good service to the citizens of Saskatchewan. We are maintaining the interlibrary loans service.

Mr. Speaker, in 1969 legislation was enacted in this province to allow libraries to coexist inside schools. Mr. Speaker, that piece of legislation exists from 1969 when Ross Thatcher was premier, through the Devine era, through the Blakeney era, through the Romanow period, through the Calvert era, and has always existed, Mr. Speaker. And it allows people to incur some significant savings by collocating across the province. And that's taking place in a number of places and perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it has to take place in some more places. We will continue to work with the libraries to find efficiencies and economies as we go forward.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, it's quite the change of tune from that minister. Just last year while honouring Library Week, Mr. Speaker, the minister welcomed "... opportunities to appreciate the contributions [of] the province's more than 1,200 libraries [that they] make to the cultural, economic, educational, and recreational development of Saskatchewan people."

We're not the only ones, Mr. Speaker, questioning the Sask Party's spin on these cuts. The Regina Public Library issued a statement this morning to correct misinformation that has been provided to the public. They say visitation is up 13 per cent over the last five years and they say that the borrowing of e-books and e-audiobooks is up 327 per cent since 2011, Mr. Speaker, a lot of which rests on the regional and provincial system that we have, Mr. Speaker. They say many of the services offered don't require a library card, but are meeting spaces and community hubs where people come to use the Internet, learn a second language, search for jobs, and participate in library programming.

Will the minister recognize the invaluable services provided by Saskatchewan libraries and immediately reinstate the funding before any more damage is done?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, province wide the number of items that's been checked out of our public libraries has dropped by 1.6 million since 2007. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite actually makes the argument by talking about how much the online services has gone up. I think he mentioned a number in excess of 300 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, those are the type of things that we have to consider as we go forward. We are moving rapidly to becoming an increasingly online province. We're pleased that the infrastructure that we've provided provides good Internet service throughout the province and, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that that continues so people have access to whatever material they think is appropriate.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work with that type of thing and, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we do everything to make sure that the citizens of our province, the students of our province, have the best access. And, Mr. Speaker, there will certainly be some changes as we go forward. We will work with the libraries. We will work with the staff at the libraries to make sure that we continue to deliver what we've committed to our citizens.

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

Provision of Hearing Services

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear the Sask Party didn't think twice before they made families pay more and get less. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has cut funding to the hearing aid plan — that's right, Mr. Speaker, a program that provides hearing tests, fittings for hearing aids, prevention programs, education, and counselling.

Mr. Speaker, these cuts are going to impact the services that people across the province access. They're going to impact kids like four-year-old Oscar Klein. Oscar is deaf and uses cochlear implants. All of his audiological services thus far have been provided by the hearing aid plan in Saskatoon, a program that the Sask Party is scrapping.

Oscar's mom has said this: "It's been a constant fight for services, but the one area that has been stable for us for the last few years has been audiology, and that no longer remains." So to the Minister of Health: how can he justify scrapping important services like this to kids like Oscar?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know the particulars of Oscar's situation that the member opposite is speaking of, but I will say, bone-anchored and cochlear implant hearing device services will continue to be provided by the health regions, Mr. Speaker.

But having said that, the hearing aid plan that was cancelled was not a decision that we made lightly. We recognize it will have an impact on some people. Mr. Speaker, in a difficult economic situation, when health services in the province take almost 40 per cent of the budget, if we're going to get a handle on expenditures, obviously there will be some impact on health.

Mr. Speaker, again we didn't take that lightly, but in the case of hearing aids, there's already been two parallel systems operating. There's a hearing aid plan and there's private services that are delivered by private audiologists, Mr. Speaker. And I think in subsequent questions if the member asks, I'd be pleased to go deeper into that. We have a wide range of services of audiologists and hearing aids that are provided across the province, Mr. Speaker. And as I said, I'd be happy to follow up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[14:15]

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, many parents, like Oscar's mom, are coming forward because they are worried about these cuts. They're worried about their kids. Mr. Speaker, the cuts to this program means a loss of nine audiologists across the province. Some of these audiologists work specifically with people like Oscar who need specialized services for their cochlear implants.

Mr. Speaker, even before these newest cuts, there were already concerns that the programs were overloaded and were having trouble fitting people in. These services are vital to a child's development and our kids can't afford to wait. Why does this minister think that it is children who need hearing service that should pay for this government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, audiologists and hearing aid services are not an insured service under the *Canada Health Act*, Mr. Speaker. Most provinces, in fact — Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta — don't offer public system hearing services, Mr. Speaker. Private audiologists in this province, who have been operating here for a great deal of time . . . I'll just read an excerpt from their news release on budget day, Mr. Speaker. It says:

SHAP was originally conceived to serve the people of Saskatchewan, especially those in rural areas. Today those services are primarily in the large urban centres. Private practice hearing services, however, have grown to encompass all areas of the province, with 32 private principal clinics and 68 satellite clinics providing far greater service delivery than SHAP could deliver.

Mr. Speaker, families and individuals that qualify under the family service plan and the supplementary plan as well in Health — so our most vulnerable — will continue to be covered, although receiving their services from private audiologists.

Mr. Speaker, again, it's not a matter that we took lightly but, Mr. Speaker, we need to focus on the core services in health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, there are many people who will be impacted badly by these cuts, Mr. Speaker, who will not fall under that most-marginalized plan, Mr. Speaker. That answer is just not acceptable. Saskatchewan is already lagging far behind other provinces when it comes to early hearing detection and intervention.

All of the evidence demonstrates the importance of early detection and intervention. Their plan will hurt the chances of early hearing detection and intervention. Mr. Speaker, it's just that simple. Kids across Saskatchewan will not get access to audiologists and to hearing aids. We hear all the time that everything is on the table, but how is it that our children's health and development ended up on the chopping block?

An essential part of this program is audiology screening for newborns and children. At the very least, can the minister commit to ensuring those services remain for the children of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, we will be the seventh province that doesn't cover those under a public system. As I mentioned already, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta don't offer public system hearing services.

Mr. Speaker, this wasn't an issue we took lightly. Those sorts of services would be nice to have. Again we didn't do this . . . We did this somewhat reluctantly. But, Mr. Speaker, we need to focus on core services in health, health like doctors and nurses and hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, there's a perfectly capable private system that already offers services in far greater areas of the province than the Saskatchewan hearing aid plan does. Mr. Speaker, we have faith that they'll rise to the occasion and provide those services. And again, Mr. Speaker, we will protect our most vulnerable under the two plans that I mentioned earlier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Changes to Taxation

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, at a time when half of Saskatchewan people are living paycheque to paycheque, these cuts and tax hikes just don't make any sense. On top of those tax hikes and Sask Party power bill increases, this weekend marked the beginning of the Sask Party's PST [provincial sales tax] hike too, a billion-dollar tax grab to pay for the Sask Party's decade-long run of mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Mr. Speaker, just in taxes, the average family will pay about \$444 more per year. They're already paying \$120 more a year in power bills; add on Sask Party's municipal tax hikes and user fee hikes. Mr. Speaker, what do they have to say to young Saskatchewan families barely making ends meet who will have to pay more for almost everything they buy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have fully acknowledged, I think the Premier's fully acknowledged, this was a difficult budget. This was a tough budget with respect to the shift that we're making on our tax base from taxing income and productivity to consumption taxes here, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have stable revenue with respect to the volatility we've seen in the resource sector over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker.

Even with these changes to the tax base, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member . . . I know she wasn't here in 2007; I wasn't here in 2007. But even with these changes, Mr. Speaker, individuals with \$40,000 income, individual families with \$50,000 income, and families with \$75,000 income — in all three of those different income levels, Mr. Speaker, combine the personal income tax rates along with a new PST expanded base, they'll still be paying less in taxes than they were under the NDP government in 2007, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, we have increased the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit in this province by 40 per cent, Mr. Speaker. An individual at the lowest income level would have to spend about \$5,800 on taxable consumable items to use up that Saskatchewan low-income tax credit, Mr. Speaker. We believe that's the way to go.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 60 — *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 60, the legal professional amendment Act, 2017 be now introduced and read a 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? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to question no. 284.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled the response to question 284.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 57 — *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of amendments to *The Tobacco Tax Act, 1998*. These amendments will implement the 2017-18 budget initiative to increase the rate of tax from 25 cents to 27 cents for cigarettes, tobacco sticks, cut tobacco, and smokeless tobacco products.

Mr. Speaker, this change to the rate of tobacco tax was announced on March 22nd, 2017 as part of the 2017-18 budget and took effect the following day. Mr. Speaker, this rate increase is part of our government's initiative to shift the province's tax base toward greater reliance on consumption taxes, at the same time as we reduce taxes on income and productivity.

Section 3 of the Act is being amended to increase the rate of tax from 25 cents to 27 cents for cigarettes, tobacco sticks, cut tobacco, and smokeless tobacco products.

Section 2 of the Act is being amended to remove definitions for the terms "Indian" and "Indian band," as these terms are not referenced in the Act, which instead refers to an "exempt consumer."

Section 2 of the Act is also being amended to create a separate tobacco category for smokeless tobacco products. This is defined to include chewing tobacco and snuff.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 57, amendments to the tobacco Act, 1998, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Finance minister has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 57, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017*, second reading. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased once again to stand in my place to offer initial comments on Bill 57, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017*.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister briefly alluded to the fact that there is going to be an increase in the number of tobacco products throughout the province of Saskatchewan as part of their measures to address the deficit that the Saskatchewan Party has created, Mr. Speaker, we looked through the bill itself. And we saw that the Saskatchewan Party are indeed raising a lot of taxes that will impact a lot of Saskatchewan families, while at the same time we notice, Mr. Speaker, that they decreased taxes to their corporate friends. But what we do know, Mr. Speaker, increasing taxes on tobacco certainly would provide a lot of challenge for those that want to afford to continue smoking or continue the use of tobacco, such as snuff.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there's a lot of negative impacts on smoking as it relates to our health of our communities, and especially the young people. We also know, through marketing and through promotion, that a lot of the tobacco companies are targeting younger people to try to begin the process of idolizing the whole notion of cigarette smoking or using smokeless tobacco.

So we know those particular challenges are out there, Mr. Speaker, but we do know that there's some great work being done by a number of organizations throughout the province to look at measures in which they could stop smoking or stop the tobacco use overall. And, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure, we want to make sure that the process itself is recognized for the better health of our Saskatchewan families, and especially as we know that tobacco companies are targeting a lot of the young people.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that this particular taxation regime that's being put in place, even if it's only on the tobacco products that we made reference to today, that there's always a balancing act that must be maintained in a sense that we don't begin to push people towards contraband tobacco products. Mr. Speaker, as we all know that there's a lot of black market opportunities out there, whether it's tobacco or snuff. There's a lot of organizations out there that are able to provide and have the younger people purchase some of these products at a much lesser cost.

So those are always issues that are of the challenging nature. So obviously our critic and our opposition team will be going through this particular bill to ensure that all those issues are addressed. And on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 57, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has adjourned debate on Bill No. 57, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 58 — *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 58, amendments to *The Corporation Capital Tax Act*.

These amendments will implement the 2017-18 budget initiative to increase the corporation capital tax rate on large financial institutions from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent, effective April 1, 2017. The change is one of the revenue initiatives introduced in the 2017-18 budget to address the current fiscal challenge facing the province.

To implement this change, specific amendments to *The Corporation Capital Tax Act* are as follows: subsection 13(2) is being amended to increase the rate of tax on large financial

institutions from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent, effective April 1, 2017. Subsection 13(2.12) is being amended to increase the rate of tax on small financial institutions from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent on their portion of taxable capital that exceeds \$1.5 billion, effective April 1, 2017, and subsection 14(2) is being amended to reflect the change in the tax rate deduction for large financial institutions from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent, effective April 1, 2017, for the portion of tax payable that is allocated outside Saskatchewan. Subsection 14(2.2) is being amended to reflect the change in the tax rate deduction for small financial institutions from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent, effective April 1, 2017, for the portion of tax on their taxable capital that exceeds \$1.5 billion and is allocated outside Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 58, amendments to *The Corporation Capital Tax Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has moved second reading of Bill No. 58, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again as customary in the Assembly, I'm proud to take my place to offer initial comments as it relates to Bill No. 58, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017*.

[14:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the minister made reference to in his opening comments, that this bill basically raises the capital tax rate for banks from 3.25 percentage level to a 4 per cent level, Mr. Speaker.

And this is obviously an effort by the Saskatchewan Party to find every possible penny that they possibly can find to try and basically balance the books for a time frame of three years from now, Mr. Speaker. They have made a lot of assumptions on that particular budget, Mr. Speaker, and particularly paid a lot of attention to their predictions on the oil prices, Mr. Speaker. And of course the minister made reference to the fact that they hope to be back in balance within three years.

And certainly our more-than-capable Finance critic has looked at their numbers herself, and with a few key advisers, and basically I think people will find out very quickly, Mr. Speaker, that this Finance minister doesn't know what they're doing, and the Saskatchewan Party itself as a caucus, that the caucus as a whole absolutely doesn't know what they're doing as it pertains to trying to balance our budgets from year to year.

Mr. Speaker, on this particular amendment, on this particular Act, there's no question that, from our perspective, making big banks pay a little more is probably a measure that many people in Saskatchewan wouldn't argue too much.

But, Mr. Speaker, you've got to be very careful here as well because this cannot be used as an excuse by the Sask Party to increase taxes on our credit union system, which is probably a smaller bank. I hate to use that word "smaller," but in terms of being national and so on and so forth being able to compete with the bigger bank, they certainly are capable of doing that.

But, Mr. Speaker, you've got to be very careful as it pertains to taxes on the credit union system because this may be a deterrent, it'll certainly be a threat to their health. So there's two things that you've got to keep in mind as we're looking at this particular bill, the impact on the credit union itself, how is it going to hurt them. And certainly, I think as I mentioned in the earlier part of my presentation, that I think that the larger banks that most people in Saskatchewan wouldn't argue too much in the fact that this increase would generate more revenues from these larger banks.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is also really important to point out that while the banks are paying more, people in Saskatchewan should not let them take that attention away from the fact that Saskatchewan families are paying a lot more taxes and for a lot more services, Mr. Speaker, than ever before. And that certainly is compliments of the Saskatchewan Party government.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have saw the mismanagement, we have witnessed the scandal, and we certainly are suffering from the waste that the Saskatchewan Party have put this province through in the last decade that they have been in power. And, Mr. Speaker, while these corporate income tax increases certainly won't have a lot of people defending the larger banks in the province of Saskatchewan, what is happening on an equal basis, Mr. Speaker, is that this particular government is going after not only taxes by the banks, but they're cutting taxes to their corporate friends and they're also increasing taxes paid by the Saskatchewan families by a billion dollars. And that is simply not fair and not acceptable.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, that these are our initial comments on this particular bill. We have a Finance critic that is more than capable of challenging the Minister of Finance on every part of this particular bill, so her opportunity to do exactly that over the next several months, Mr. Speaker, will certainly become apparent. And on that note I will simply move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 58.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 58, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 48 — *The Education Property Tax Act*

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act*. Mr. Speaker, beginning January 1, 2018, *The Education Property Tax Act* will allow for the redirection of education property taxes, or EPT, to the General Revenue Fund, or the GRF. Municipalities will continue to collect EPT from taxpayers, but direct the money to the province rather than school divisions, this response to school divisions' request to wind up their role respecting property taxes, given the changes government has made over the last number of years regarding setting EPT mill

rates.

The redirection of EPT will also, Mr. Speaker, achieve efficiencies for school divisions, municipalities, and government. Both the municipal and education sectors support this change. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, this bill, along with consequential amendments to a number of other Acts, sets out a number of matters related to levying, collection, and remittance of EPT to the GRF so that an orderly and smooth transition takes place for municipalities, school divisions, and government. Taxpayers will not see any changes to how they pay their EPT.

Mr. Speaker, I will again speak to the main highlights of what this bill will do. First, it will maintain the current requirement for municipalities to collect EPT from ratepayers. The difference is EPT will be remitted to government instead of school divisions as of January 1, 2018. To accommodate this, government will be added as an other taxing authority for EPT purposes. This will allow the application of normal property tax processes and practices to continue to apply to the EPT.

Second, the new bill will provide for provincial approval of EPT exemptions and abatements above a threshold that will be set in regulations following further consultation. Below that threshold, municipalities will be able to decide, using their discretion. Mr. Speaker, there will be no change to the local ability to exempt or abate the municipal portion of property taxes. This is entirely at the discretion of locally elected councils, and will continue to be.

Other matters such as municipal tax enforcement, the ability for municipalities to enter into agreements with respect to the collection of taxes, and the ability for separate school divisions to assess the property tax base will continue to apply to EPT the same as now.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the new Act will make consequential amendments to a number of other Acts to ensure Government Relations and the Finance legislation reflects the redirection of EPT to the GRF. Specifically consequential amendments are to be made to the three municipal Acts and to *The Revenue and Financial Services Act* to provide the Ministry of Finance with responsibility for receiving the EPT collected by municipalities on behalf of government. As a result, Finance will have the authority for this, similar to the collection of other taxes that it is responsible for. The Ministry of Government Relations will maintain its current responsibility for policy and auditing the monthly and annual EPT returns.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of consultations the ministry consulted with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, New North, the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan, the cities of Regina and Saskatoon, the municipal administrators associations, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the Saskatchewan association of school board officials, and the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association.

Consultations took place over the summer of 2016 and included a face-to-face meeting with municipal associations, education associations, and ministry employees to discuss the contents of

the side-by-side drafting instructions. I would like to take this opportunity to specifically thank municipal and education stakeholders for working closely with the government to develop this legislation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the main purpose of this bill is to allow for the redirection of EPT to the GRF. The new bill will continue the current practice of municipalities levying, collecting, and remitting EPT, as this is the most efficient and cost-effective means of performing these tasks. The government will also continue to be transparent in setting the EPT rates and reporting to both the EPT revenues and the funding of school divisions.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Government Relations has moved second reading of Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act*. Is it the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House today to enter into the debate on the Bill No. 48. I'd like to thank the minister for the comments. Usually second reading comments are very closely studied by everyone who is trying to understand the intent of government and when it comes to introducing bills. So those kinds of comments provide a good context for analyzing the impact of the bill itself.

Now I think what I'd like to start out with, Mr. Speaker, is just a reference to some of the media quotes that have been made about this bill, and in particular the Saskatchewan School Boards Association president, Shawn Davidson. And what he said is, while they are looking forward to working with the minister and the minister has indicated there has been consultations, he says he does not want to see divisions lose their autonomy.

And certainly we know that this shift from the collection of the educational property taxes from the school boards to directly to the GRF is a significant change and a significant loss of autonomy for school divisions. He went on to say . . . And this is an article from March 23rd, 2017. This is a quote. "The reasons why local boards are elected is because our ratepayers in our communities want to see an elected trustee that makes decisions about their kids' futures," Davidson said.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to share a little story with you about my hometown and something that happened way back when I was a little kid in the '60s. Mr. Speaker, my dad was on the local school board for the public school division, but my family . . . My mother was born and raised a Catholic and all of us kids were born and raised Catholic, so we were going to the separate school division. But dad, as a community-minded person, he decided to step up to the plate and provide that local leadership and local service to the public school board.

In those days the inclusion of French as a subject matter in the curriculum was hotly, hotly contested and a very divisive issue in our community, Mr. Speaker. It was one that split people along certain lines. There was people who left the Catholic

division and went to the public division and vice versa. And there were a lot of people really, really upset about the way French language instruction was being handled.

Now you can imagine how that could really tear apart a small town like mine, Mr. Speaker. And so thankfully for the presence of the local school board, and I would say my dad's leadership and his calm leadership, they were able to work through a very divisive issue at the community level, at the local level, with local leaders and local elected school board officials being able to lead the way in seeing that the community was brought together and wasn't divided. So that's just one very small example, but it's one that I have of how local autonomy is so critically important to the success of schools in communities but also to solving disputes and managing conflict in terms of local-level conflicts. And that's something that is irreplaceable and I think something that really speaks to the value of having local leaders step up to the plate.

I just was at home this weekend, Mr. Speaker, and my dad celebrated his 90th birthday. And he took a lead there too and was leading the singalong. My dad is a leader in so many ways. But his leadership on the public school boards in the '60s, I think, and his experience with the Catholic school division . . . His kids were going to the Catholic schools, so he understood both sides of the coin. He understood all the community that was involved. And I think his level-headed leadership was a key to the success of resolving, at least managing, a divisive issue within our community.

So we know how important local school boards are, and certainly I think this government heard that message. And they were floating balloons before the election, as you'll recall, that perhaps amalgamation of school boards would be on the table. Everything's on the table. Everything . . . We don't know what's going to happen. And I think many, many people expressed concern about that to the point where this government actually listened to those concerns and said, well we're not going to amalgamate the school boards.

But what are they doing, Mr. Speaker? With this bill, they're doing the same thing that they are to STC through the Crown protection Act. They're emasculating the ability of locally elected, autonomous school boards to be able to make decisions relevant to their community. And so what have they left? And that is part of the problem. When you take away control of the money, then you take away a large part of the local, autonomous decision making. And it's pretty evident, Mr. Speaker, that that's the case. There hasn't been anyone speaking out in favour of this move, but somehow the minister seems to think that this is a move that, because they consulted, that everybody agrees with it. And I don't think anything could be further from reality, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that we see with the STC . . . Well they say they're winding it down, so it's not affecting the Crown protection Act. But when you wind it down, that's basically taking it out of the Crown protection Act because, Mr. Speaker, there will be nothing left. And I think we say the same thing here when you're talking about the autonomy of local school boards. You can say they're there in presence and allow the elections to continue, but when you have these kinds of bills that take away any power that they might have to make those

local decisions, to be autonomous, it's definitely questionable whether or not that they actually have that autonomy anymore, Mr. Speaker.

[14:45]

So I mean the government has indicated they actually listened, and I'm hoping they'll do the same with libraries. And I'm hoping they'll do the same with a number of other of the cuts that are hurting Saskatchewan people quite profoundly, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly they will be hearing now about that, although they didn't ask before the election and I don't think they consulted with a lot of people on those issues. They did do the pre-consult in terms of amalgamation, but I don't think they talked a whole lot with school boards about taking away their autonomy when it comes to the education property tax portion.

We had some words from the Minister of Finance after the budget was delivered, and he said that these amendments will allow the Education minister to provide decision making on some of these things going on in school divisions that do not occur right now. So that, to me . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's a different Act.

Ms. Sproule: — It's an education Act amendment. And I thank the minister for pointing out that's a different Act, but it's the same idea. What we're doing is we're seeing the removal of local autonomy. And so that's another example of the removal of local autonomy, that school boards are now going to have to answer to the Education minister when they aren't in agreement anymore.

What the Minister of Finance said was, when divisions are uncooperative. Well to me, Mr. Speaker, that's when divisions don't agree with the Education minister or the minister responsible for municipalities or the Minister of Finance. Is that the definition of uncooperative that we're talking about here?

And so might is right, Mr. Speaker? Is that what that's suggesting, is that because you're a minister, you are able to say to someone else who's being perfectly reasonable, but doesn't agree, that they are being uncooperative? I don't know if that reflects well on democracy, Mr. Speaker, and it certainly doesn't reflect well on the local autonomy that school boards would have.

And so we know that these changes are very concerning, and certainly taking away the spending ability and the control over the property taxes is concerning as well. What's also concerning is the increase in property taxes. And we know that the mill rates, according to an article that came out in the press recently, mill rates for education property taxes are actually decreasing, but reassessment and increased property value means tax revenues will increase by about 9.8 per cent. So we can see there's a tax hike here of 9.8 per cent on property owners, primarily I think people that live, you know, in urban areas, that they're going to have to absorb in addition to all the other cuts and increased taxes that they're facing in this budget.

And we know school boards are being asked to trim their costs

by 3.5 per cent, which is . . . You know, when you've been cut to the bone and the cupboard is bare, Mr. Speaker, it's really difficult to find any more resources. You know, the old saying is, you can't get blood from a stone. And I think, you know, our school boards are certainly a good example of that where they've been forced to dig into their revenues, or sorry, their reserves, Mr. Speaker, and those were meant for something entirely different. But because they have no control over their finances, these kinds of bills actually make it worse for school boards instead of better.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that other of my colleagues are going to want to weigh in on this particular bill. And you know, we're certainly hearing a lot of feedback from people across the province, school boards, teachers, parents, and we're going to continue the debate as we go along. So at this point I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 48.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has adjourned debate on Bill No. 48, the education property tax amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 49 — *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Education Property Tax Act*

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*. This bill amends one bilingual Act, *The Education Act, 1995*. As a result of this being a bilingual Act, consequential amendments to this Act require a separate bill. Mr. Speaker, this bill simply repeals existing sections in *The Education Act, 1995* related to school taxes as these will now be contained in *The Education Property Tax Act*.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Government Relations moves second reading of Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A few brief comments on this particular bill. It's a very short bill, and as the minister indicated in her opening comments that it's in relation to the fact that the amendments are being made to *The Education Act*, and therefore there's a requirement for some changes to be made separately in Bill 49.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, *The Education Act* is a bill that's provided in both official languages. Therefore these changes need to be made in a separate piece of legislation. By taking out all of the references to education property tax out of *The*

Education Act and putting it into a separate . . . This is a brand new bill, *The Education Property Tax Act* itself, which will be unilingual — appears at least for the time being — so all of those provisions that are in, the bilingual provisions that are in *The Education Act*, are now being yanked and they're being put into a unilingual Act where they will no longer be available in bilingual form. Plus of course there are changes that are being made to the education property tax in Bill No. 48. So as far as that goes, Mr. Speaker, there's really no need for further comment but I would then move at this point that we adjourn Bill No. 49.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 49. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 53 — *The Provincial Health Authority Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Provincial Health Authority Act*. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring the people of our province receive high-quality, timely health care regardless of where they live in Saskatchewan. To support and improve front-line patient care, we appointed an advisory panel to make recommendations for the most effective and efficient health system for our province. The advisory panel received over 300 submissions from Saskatchewan residents and directly met with over 20 health system stakeholder groups.

In January our government released and accepted all of the panel's final recommendations. This includes the transition of the 12 existing regional health authorities into a single provincial health authority and other system wide transformation initiatives to better coordinate and deliver health care services across the province. The proposed legislation brings Saskatchewan another step closer to creating a single provincial health authority that will improve front-line patient care by removing arbitrary health region boundaries.

This change represents a consolidation of administration, not a centralization of services. It means a first step to improving special care placement and emergency medical services by removing arbitrary health region boundaries. It means integrated systems will enable nurses, physicians, and support staff to coordinate their efforts to serve our residents better. And it also means removing unnecessary duplication of administrative support.

Mr. Speaker, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* is focused on important administrative and operational requirements that must be in place the day the new organization begins operations. This includes enabling specific roles and responsibilities of the new organization and the authority to appoint a board of directors with up to 10 members to oversee the operations. A board and CEO [chief executive officer] will be put in place in the coming months to help guide the transition and prepare for those operations.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation will provide the ability for oversight of the contracts of the CEO and those that report to the CEO. While leaders in our health system will be paid appropriately, our government will continue to ensure that tax dollars are spent wisely.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing high-quality health services in every part of this province. In particular, that includes our rural and remote communities.

As recommended by the advisory panel, this legislation allows for the creation and continuation of community advisory networks. We are committed to ensuring that local voices continue to be heard and that the people of Saskatchewan have a relationship and representation with the new provincial health authority.

Mr. Speaker, we know that local fundraising foundations are important partners in the delivery of quality health care in our province. The proposed legislation ensures foundations will continue to be independent fundraising organizations and that the funds they raise continue to be used for the local health services or facilities that they were raised for.

The Provincial Health Authority Act will carry forward many of the existing provisions of *The Regional Health Services Act*, which will be repealed and replaced by this Act. Following passage of the new Act and establishment of bylaws and regulations, the new provincial health authority will come into force. This is currently anticipated to occur in the fall of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that many transformational initiatives recommended by the advisory panel will be implemented in a phased approach over time. This includes full health system policy and program integration and clinical services redesign, including the areas of laboratory and diagnostic imaging, acute care services, and emergency medical services. As well, engagement with indigenous people will occur in the coming months to seek guidance on how to improve services to First Nation and Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, the new provincial health authority will support our government's commitment to providing high-quality front-line patient care to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Provincial Health Authority Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has moved second reading of Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to join debate this afternoon on Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, and then consequently on the consequent amendments Act, Bill 54.

It was with great interest that I saw this bill come forward, or received the news about the intention of the government to proceed with one big health region, Mr. Speaker. Because of course not a year ago, you know, a year less a day, we were out on the campaign trail and this, the one big health region as a policy initiative, Mr. Speaker, was in fact a central plank in the

platform of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan. And you know, certainly the Sask Party had something to say about, they were going to look to finding savings from administration and how to better put that onto the front lines, Mr. Speaker. But this, what is represented here in Bills No. 53 and 54, is actually not their policy, Mr. Speaker. It belongs to the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan.

And you know, it's always kind of interesting to see the way that these circles go round in politics, Mr. Speaker. But if their big health initiative on the part of this government is to take the central plank out of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan's platform, Mr. Speaker, if that's their central initiative right out of the gates after there's been, you know, in the intervening year there's been plenty of talk about transformational change, Mr. Speaker, and the meetings and the this and the that. If after all that, Mr. Speaker, that their big move in health care is on one big health region, you know, that's interesting.

And we'll certainly take the time to examine this initiative as best we're able, Mr. Speaker. But any time we find this government coming forward and saying that they're going to find savings out there in the land . . . Of course there's not just years but several years on the record, Mr. Speaker, not just of rhetoric but of actual experience when it comes to the way that this government wrote lean into everybody's mandate for the ministers over there. And certainly health care was the main beachhead for the lean initiative, Mr. Speaker. Health care was where they brought John Black lean to town, you know, paid 40 million and counting, Mr. Speaker, on lean consultants.

But certainly, Mr. Speaker, any time this government gets out there and talks about how they're going to find administrative savings, the tendency on the part of the people of Saskatchewan is to check their wallet, Mr. Speaker. And any time that this government . . . You know, it's been a long way away from when this government had Tony Dagnone come in to do the patient-centred care review, and how far they've come from that, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

So any time they talk about administrative savings and then, you know, out of the gates aren't able to identify what those savings might actually be, Mr. Speaker, and coming to the dance belatedly with that information, Mr. Speaker, any time that they talk about how this is going to be better for the front lines, you know, it's not hard to harken back to all the guff that got spent on the lean file, Mr. Speaker, by this government.

Lean was their signature initiative. It's what they were recommending to first ministers right across this country as the brand new approach in health care, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen how that worked out, or rather did not work out, Mr. Speaker — the tens of millions of dollars that went into the lean file, the way that there was a bit of preaching around listening to front-line workers, but the practice was something very different, Mr. Speaker.

So when it comes to an initiative like this, Mr. Speaker, the fact that they've taken it from the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan's electoral platform in the last campaign, that's,

you know, that's always cause for concern, Mr. Speaker.

Then secondly that, you know, we just hope to goodness that they learned the lessons from another Progressive Conservative government, and that was the one that ruled Alberta for many, many years, Mr. Speaker. That one big health region was an initiative of that government. And that was a disaster, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the way that that did not serve the people of Alberta, that it did not serve the patients who were counting on care from that system, and did not deliver on the administrative savings that were touted on the front end, but in fact made a system that already has its challenges with bureaucracy and the division of resources between administration and the front lines, Mr. Speaker, it made that that much worse, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, that they've . . . They didn't run on this. They lifted it, you know, holus-bolus from the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan's platform after the election, you know, despite not having talked about that with the people of Saskatchewan and in fact having run against the PCs [Progressive Conservatives] and having not, you know, looked at that policy prescription from the Progressive Conservatives and offered up support. That wasn't the case, Mr. Speaker.

But here we go again with the people that brought you John Black lean and, you know, deploying the senseis and the paper-airplane-making exercise and the many different ways that they got so far away from patient-centred care, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to be watching that aspect of this government's approach to health care very carefully. We're going to be watching very closely to see what lessons they have or have not learned from the disaster of an experience that happened with one big health region in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to be interested to see how . . . You know, it's hard to look at this effort and think, you know, don't you already have outstanding work to be done as it regards bringing indigenous people's interest to bear within the system, Mr. Speaker? You know, isn't there a years-old promise outstanding, Mr. Speaker, to work with, in this case, the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] on the whole question of indigenous health and how that is or is not served by the Saskatchewan health care system, Mr. Speaker?

And you know, so when they come to the table yet again with another promise of, well we're going to take a look at this and we're going to see how we can better incorporate these interests, Mr. Speaker, here's a way they could do that is, you know, keep your promises that you've made already. Do the work that you've said you were going to do in conjunction, in partnership, in co-operation with First Nations and Métis people, and not forget about that. But yet again come to the table like this and say, here we go again.

Mr. Speaker, the issues go wanting. The care for patients goes wanting as this government, you know, seems to be more interested in diversionary tactics than actual service of the people.

Mr. Speaker, again in terms of where this initiative comes from, in terms of the way that this government has entered into this

particular policy position, I hate to be a suspicious person, Mr. Speaker, in this political life, but we've seen parts of this movie before. And it didn't work out terribly well for the people of Saskatchewan who are supposed to be at the base of all of this. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we'll be looking to the sector in terms of the consultation to go on.

But this government has come forward proclaiming savings. They couldn't tell us what they were out of the gate. You know, some of the hard numbers we have seen so far involved the buy-out packages with the CEOs. And again, Mr. Speaker, we'll be interested to see how those generous packages, how that approach works for the rest of the system in terms of the people who are on the front lines in Saskatchewan health care.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll not have much more to say when we get to Bill No. 54, but I know that this is something we watch very closely in terms of how this government does or does not serve the interests of Saskatchewan people in the health care system. But without any further ado, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 54 — *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Provincial Health Authority Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*. As I outlined in the second reading speech for *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, the creation of a new provincial organization will improve front-line patient care by ensuring health care services are better coordinated across the province. Mr. Speaker, *The Regional Health Services Act* will be repealed and replaced by *The Provincial Health Authority Act*.

There are a number of other Acts that are also impacted by this change. To ensure consistency of legislation, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* outlines all of the Acts where reference to *The Regional Health Services Act* will be replaced with *The Provincial Health Authority Act*.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Health has moved that Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again as the minister has outlined succinctly, and I thank him for that, this has to do with updating the language consequentially. And the real policy impact certainly comes in Bill No. 53.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move . . . I don't know that my colleagues will have much more to say about this in the days that come, but certainly I'm sure they may have some points to add in, in the train of the real star of the show here, Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre, the Opposition House Leader, has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 54. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 50 — *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to move second reading of Bill 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*. This bill is being proposed to address core recommendations from a comprehensive review completed in 2011-12. It was recommended that Wascana Centre be preserved, enhanced, and protected. The Government of Saskatchewan assumed leadership for the continued operation of Wascana Centre and each landowner — the province, the city of Regina, and the University of Regina — be responsible for their own lands and assets under an overarching agreement to ensure consistency in approaches and standards for land management.

Once passed, this legislation will move responsibility for the Wascana Centre and all of its assets to the Provincial Capital Commission and will also repeal the existing Wascana Centre Act. The bill will enable a streamlined approach to operations and investments in the park and will bring stability to Wascana Centre's funding. We also believe efficiencies can be reached through economies of scale gained by working closely with the Ministry of Central Services. The Act will help ensure sustainability of these lands which serve not only as a natural urban retreat for the people of the province but also as the seat of provincial government and an area of provincial historical significance.

Key elements of the new legislation include: the creation of an enhanced Provincial Capital Commission with direct oversight of Wascana Centre among other features of the provincial capital such as Government House and the Territorial Building; a new streamlined governance board composition with continued input from the city of Regina and the University of Regina for decisions affecting all partners; responsibility for

land management and upkeep residing with the respective landowners subject to an overarching agreement managed by the commission to ensure consistency and common standards; collaborative planning among the partners for the management, operation, and investment into common areas, assets, and infrastructure; the contribution of provisions related to the long-standing master plan development and updating process; and the continuation of the engineering advisory committee and architectural advisory committee to assess and guide land use development activities in the park.

The new legislation is also more streamlined and modern and does not require duplication of existing provisions covered by other provincial legislation. Mr. Speaker, the proposed provincial capital commission Act allows for an improved approach to operations and investment in Wascana Centre. It ensures that the centre can continue to serve the people of Saskatchewan, not only today but also into the future. It also aligns with the efforts of the Provincial Capital Commission to ensure this significant feature of the capital city and the home of the Legislative Building remain a source of pride for Saskatchewan people. Therefore I move second reading of this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Central Services has moved that Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased once again to stand in my place to offer the initial comments on Bill 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*. Now, Mr. Speaker, as the minister basically explained what they have planned, as we sat here and listened to some of the comments, some of the most basic information that we gleaned from the bill that was presented to us, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that, in the past, the land that is being administered and being made reference to in Bill 50 was actually negotiated in a three-partnership deal — the U of R [University of Regina] was obviously one partner and the second partner was the city of Regina and of course the Provincial Capital Commission.

And if my information serves me correct, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the city had three representatives, the university had three representatives, and I think the Capital Commission had five, a total of 11 representatives that basically managed the affairs of the legislative grounds, the grounds on which this building of course is located on. And over the years, Mr. Speaker, the city has lobbied, as the U of R has lobbied, and certainly as the various respective governments have lobbied all kinds of partners in trying to make sure that the Wascana Centre was a showcase.

It was an opportunity where many of our visitors that came to the province obviously you want to bring them into the legislative grounds where the Assembly of course is built. And of course you want your Assembly and the grounds in which your Assembly sits to be very attractive, being well maintained and certainly is able to have our visitors become in awe of our capital city. So all of those points that the minister raised is absolutely important to recognize that if you wanted to have a showcase centre, Mr. Speaker, that represents democracy here in Saskatchewan, then the legislative ground certainly has to be

maintained and something that we can quite frankly show off.

[15:15]

Now as I said at the earlier part of my comment, Mr. Speaker, that in the past we had an 11-member board. Three were appointed by the U of R, three were appointed by the city, and of course five were appointed by the provincial government. The minister wants to change all that, Mr. Speaker. She wants to take over the grounds. Now people within the opposition circles are wondering what is that all about. What is the purpose of the provincial government with all their mismanagement, scandal, and waste, now want to take over the very grounds in which the Assembly sits on? What happened to the partnership?

And as I mentioned, the partnership often lobbied a number of organizations in the federal government to help beautify the legislative grounds. Now obviously the U of R had good history in that, Mr. Speaker. The province also had a good history in this, and of course the city. Now what happened though in the past, I can, you know, I can certainly point out that one of the examples that I witnessed, Mr. Speaker, was the big dig. As people know, the actual lake that sits in the front of the Assembly, that there was a joint effort, not only by the city and by the province, but the federal government got involved as well.

And as you can see, that partnership was really, really thriving in a sense of getting federal dollars, city dollars, and of course provincial dollars to make sure that the big dig was successful, and that now we see evidence of that partnership, Mr. Speaker, as you walk the grounds. There are beautiful grounds. The lake itself has been refurbished, so to speak, as best you can. And there was a lot of work put into making sure that our centre of democracy was a showcase centre, something that we can be very proud of.

That was a direct result of the partnership we had between the U of R, the city, and the province, Mr. Speaker. That partnership brought in many more partners and more particular, Mr. Speaker, the federal government. They became partners in the big dig, and you're seeing evidence of how partnerships can thrive and work.

Now the minister comes along and says through this particular bill, Bill 50, we're going to do away with that partnership. We are not going to assume authority over the Wascana grounds, Mr. Speaker. We're going to get rid of the partnership. We're going to make sure the city only has one representative, the U of R has one representative, and I think the other number for the other provincial representatives on this commission, I think, is five.

So what's happening, Mr. Speaker, is that you're going to have, quite frankly, a total of five members. You're going to have the Saskatchewan Party control all decision making as it pertains to the Wascana Centre grounds, Mr. Speaker. So we are wondering what is the reason for that, Mr. Speaker. Why are they doing this? What is the objective that they have? Because obviously, if you look at everything that the Saskatchewan Party has touched, Mr. Speaker, everything from the smart meter fiasco, the bypass boondoggle, Mr. Speaker . . . Now we're paying a carbon capture tax on all our power bills, Mr.

Speaker. They took a billion dollars out of people's pockets as of this past weekend, Mr. Speaker, and yet we're still in deficit and our debt's still climbing at an alarming rate.

And so I was sitting there saying, well why would they take over the centre? What is the objective? Why would they be doing this, Mr. Speaker? And once we begin to ask questions on this particular bill, we find out that many of the workers, some of the janitors that they fired from this very building . . . As you look outside there's a lot of workers. I believe they're SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] members, Mr. Speaker. They maintain the grounds as part of the partnership under the U of R, under the city, and of course under the province. So I worry about those particular workers, Mr. Speaker. Is this another attempt by the Sask Party to go after our working men and women by taking over this partnership that was thriving, that has been in place for a long time? They come along. They swoop in. They take control of the centre. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's the first step in privatizing the maintenance of the grounds of the Wascana Centre, Mr. Speaker. And that's what I believe is the objective behind this particular bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you are, quite frankly, as an opposition member, you would be . . . One would be very careful to point out to workers that you don't want to see them lose their jobs. But it's important to warn them that, when the Sask Party does things of this sort, the last people that they look after are working men and women of our province. We've seen evidence of that time and time again.

So the big question I have on the Wascana Centre Authority Act, Bill 50, is, what is the government's objective? Why are they throwing away that partnership that was thriving? Why are they throwing away those partners that were contributing to the Wascana Centre enhancements over time, Mr. Speaker? Why all of a sudden that this is a pressing necessity for the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker?

I can only surmise, Mr. Speaker, that their plan is to get rid of all the working men and women and privatize the care and maintenance of the centre, Mr. Speaker, and once again proves that the Sask Party had all of this information and really quite frankly didn't have the courage to tell the people of Saskatchewan what their plans are. So once again I think I would really be worried about the workers that maintain the parks now because I think that their jobs are being looked at by this particular Act, by this bill, by the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. Everything that they have touched has either gone broke or they've privatized and they have not told the people of Saskatchewan any of these actions prior to the last election. And I say shame on them. The people of Saskatchewan will not forget the fact that their trust was betrayed by the Sask Party, and this is yet another nail in the coffin of our working men and women from my perspective.

And I point out that today because we can't figure out for what reason would the province of Saskatchewan destroy that partnership, take over the Wascana Centre, Mr. Speaker. And I think the only reason they're doing that, Mr. Speaker, is they can bring in their private, for-profit companies to privatize the service here and eliminate the working men and women of our province that have given a lot of time and effort in maintaining

not only this particular building, but the hallowed grounds in which it sits on. So, Mr. Speaker, it is something that is totally confusing to the opposition.

We have other members of the Regina caucus who are obviously going to speak up on this as time goes on. There's a lot of people really watching what this bill is all about. And the fundamental question is why are they doing this at this time. And, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of theories, but the opposition's going to hold the government to account. On that note, Mr. Speaker, we have 10 other members that want to have discussions on this bill and will have further comment from the opposition. So at this time I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 50. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 51 — *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corp. was established in 1979 at a time of crisis in the grain handling system. A shortage of railcars made it hard to move grain. As a result, Canada lost some major international sales and others were at risk. The provincial government of the day made the decision to purchase 1,000 hopper cars, 900 of which remain in service today.

Today those cars are nearing the end of their service life. According to our officials, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corp. cars have about 14 years of service left. This leaves us with two choices: either we plan to replace the fleet over the next 14 years at an estimated cost of over \$100 million, or we sell the cars while they still have some commercial value. There were good reasons for the government to get into the grain car business back in the '70s, but times have changed and we're in a much different place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of work has been done with the key players in the grain handling system — producers, industry, and government. More work is needed, but we feel like the grain handling and transportation system is well positioned to meet the transportation needs of Saskatchewan producers.

And the issues that do exist are more about capacity at key points in the system rather than the shortage of cars. In fact, SGCC's [Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation] fleet represents less than 4 per cent of the hopper cars in the entire grain handling system. In other words, the SGCC just doesn't play the same role in the grain handling system that it once did.

It also needs to be pointed out that the corporation's financial statements have shown a loss of the last number of years despite the claims by members opposite. In 2015-16, SGCC ran a deficit of \$221,000.

The cars also came with maintenance costs. In 2014, 293 of the cars were repainted for \$2.4 million. It is estimated that repainting the rest of the fleet would cost about \$4.1 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a result, we will be selling the fleet.

Essentially the bill transfers the assets of the SGCC to the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure. The ministry will then manage the winding down of the corporation. There is already interest in our fleet, and we expect a sale to occur in this budget year. Saskatchewan's shortline rails will be given the first chance to purchase the cars. Transferring ownership of the cars to shortlines will reduce their reliance on the class 1 railways for cars.

It will also ensure the cars continue to move Saskatchewan grains, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is important for Saskatchewan farmers and shortlines. It allows them the opportunity to move grain to market, and it also gives the grain producers a chance to load producer cars if they so wish. And it also gives an opportunity for other grain industries to do business with farmers, which will help create a competitive atmosphere for farmers to move their products through different companies and through different mechanisms, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The most important thing is that the cars will be used by Saskatchewan farmers to move Saskatchewan grains.

It's important to note that under previous leases, the cars were being used, for example, by CP [Canadian Pacific] Rail. Under CP, the cars were being used all over North America. Now they will be hauling grain or commodities for Saskatchewan farmers, which is very positive.

I would also like to mention that with the winding down of the Grain Car Corporation, we'll also be eliminating the shortline rail sustainability program. For shortline operators, I know this is not welcome news. However, as the Premier and the Minister of Finance have repeated over the past several months, difficult decisions needed to be made given our current financial realities. And this is certainly one of those difficult decisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

While the program is being eliminated, we want to continue to work with our provincial shortlines to investigate opportunities for federal funding in the future. And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Highways and Infrastructure has moved that Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased once again to stand in my place to give initial comments as it pertains to Bill 51, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corp. repeal Act, Mr. Speaker.

And all I can say is that, well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. This is another example of how the Saskatchewan Party is going to be selling every tangible asset that they're able to sell, Mr. Speaker. Anything. They're going to have a wall-to-wall sale of our assets. And, Mr. Speaker, this is another example of what we have said all along, that the Saskatchewan Party didn't have the courage to tell the people of Saskatchewan what their plans were prior to the last election. They sat on all this information, Mr. Speaker, and they would not tell the people the truth behind things like the land titles office, Mr. Speaker, the liquor stores, and now the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker, and shutting down STC, Mr. Speaker. These are examples of what the people of Saskatchewan really are angry about today — the fact that there is going to be a sale of as many assets as possible.

And the minister didn't surprise anyone when he said, oh, we've had interested parties come forward. We knew all along that his plans were to sell them, Mr. Speaker, even before he sat in that chair. The moment that the Sask Party won the election, their plan was to sell as many of the assets that the people of Saskatchewan have in order for us to try and backfill what we think is a disgraceful attempt to try and balance the books — their bad books, Mr. Speaker — on the backs of Saskatchewan people's assets. And certainly the Saskatchewan Crown corporation assets, Mr. Speaker, have served Saskatchewan well over the years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I'll point out is that along with the shutdown, the impact that it's going to have on the farm community and where CP fits, Mr. Speaker. These are some of the things that people ought to really begin to assess before they sell off assets that are attached to the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker. The minister alludes to things like shortline rails and also spoke about the fact that we're moving Saskatchewan grain. All these words, Mr. Speaker, really there is no guarantee whatsoever that any of the conditions that they put on the sale of these grain cars, Mr. Speaker, will ever be respected in the future.

[15:30]

Now I point out that there was a lot of discussion around CP, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to moving grain, a number of years ago. I can remember when the current minister was the . . . I think he was the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], Mr. Speaker. And during the history of the greatest grain transportation crisis in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where billions of dollars of grain were sitting in bins, Mr. Speaker, were sitting in bins, that member as president of the SARM sat on his hands. Didn't say a peep, Mr. Speaker.

You know why he didn't say a peep, Mr. Speaker? It's because his party was in power. So he sat on his hands, was very, very quiet. Was very, very quiet. So we don't in any way, shape, or form take any advice from him as it pertains to helping out the farm families and the farm communities in this province. I refer, Mr. Speaker, to the Finance critic, who's got a great background and a great history with the family farm and she gives us a lot of information about what the struggles are for many farm families throughout the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we sit here and we sit here, we talk about the Grain Car Corporation. And yes, there's no question from my mind that perhaps the member from rural Saskatchewan, the current minister, would have greater understanding of rural Saskatchewan than me, Mr. Speaker. But actions that he has undertaken, or non-actions in the past dictate to me that he has political masters that he would listen to at the expense of the farm community. And we've seen that, many examples of that in his history as president of SARM, Mr. Speaker. He didn't say a peep when there was a crisis happening in transporting the grains and the commodities of the farmers of this province, Mr. Speaker. And that's why on this side of the Assembly anything that he says about, generally says about the betterment of the family farm, Mr. Speaker, we all have a smile and we're saying, yes, okay, based on your history, we're going to take lessons from you on protecting the interests of family farms throughout the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, whether it is the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, our bus service, Mr. Speaker, whether it is the liquor stores, whether it's land titles, or whether it's the selling off of the Grain Car Corporation's assets, we know the Saskatchewan Party is so broke they're going to sell everything that is not nailed down.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another example of how they said they've had interest. And can you ever see, Mr. Speaker . . . And we will see who those interested parties are. We will see who they sell these grain cars to, Mr. Speaker. We will see what they sell these cars for, Mr. Speaker, and we will see what ironclad guarantees that they would have to make sure that these grain cars are committed to moving grain, Saskatchewan grain, for Saskatchewan farmers after they sell these assets.

And I go back to that point, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, their agenda is their political party. Their agenda is their philosophical beliefs, Mr. Speaker. It is not the people of Saskatchewan, and it's certainly not the Saskatchewan's farmer interest that they're looking at because as evidenced in the current, in the current minister that's proposing this bill, Mr. Speaker, he sat on his hands when the farmers were struggling to get their grain to market, and we will never forget that. As long as he sits in the Assembly, that's all we see is someone that bowed down to political masters and did not represent the interests of the farmers when the time to do so was very apparent, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the reasons why we'll continue to hold them to account. We'll continue challenging him and the Minister of Agriculture on what they're doing for the farm communities, Mr. Speaker, because we don't see no evidence of that whatsoever.

So on that note, we have many of our caucus members that know a lot more about the farm business, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to me, but what I do know, what I do know is that minister should be ashamed of himself. He sat on his hands, didn't say a word while the rest of the farm community suffered. He sat there, and like political masters told him, don't say nothing, don't say nothing, and he never did.

And that's why we sit here, we look at some of these bills, and they're actually laughable for us to think that he's going to now protect Saskatchewan farmers' interests. It is corporate interests that he's concerned about. Let us not forget that, Mr. Speaker,

because quite frankly this is another example, another example, Bill 51, of how the Saskatchewan Party want to sell off any asset they can to their corporate buddies.

And, Mr. Speaker, based on the history of this minister and based on the actions of this government, the interest is not of the people of Saskatchewan. It is not for the farm community, Mr. Speaker. It is for their corporate buddies, and that's what this bill is going to do. And that's why we're very interested in who's buying these grain cars and for how much. And what guarantees does this government and that minister have for moving Saskatchewan grain by the Saskatchewan farmer? And I say to people of Saskatchewan, based on his history, that ain't on. He's not going to take care of the interests of the farmers to move their product to market, Mr. Speaker. He's shown that in the past, and he ain't about to change his style in the future.

So on that note, more capable people that have an agricultural background will be challenging the minister and the Saskatchewan Party as it pertains to Bill 51. So on that note, I move that we adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 52 — *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*. As a result of a \$1.2 billion reduction in revenues, the provincial government this year were forced to review the role of government in a number of service areas. As part of our transformational change process announced last year, a reinvigorated commitment to core service provision has been our priority. Through this process our government has been reviewing our role in many spending areas.

In the past, some of our urban parks have been jointly funded by government, cities, and in some cases universities and rural municipalities. With this in mind, the province commissioned a study into the funding and governance structure of the Meewasin Valley Authority. The study was completed by MNP and a report was provided to the government in late 2016. The findings of that report stated that when compared to other urban parks with similar sizes and mandates across Canada, the Meewasin Valley Authority's funding and governance structure were indeed unique.

Meyers Norris Penny recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan transfer funding responsibility to the city of Saskatoon. In addition, since 2007-2008 the Government of Saskatchewan has provided record grants, an increase of more than 103 per cent to municipalities through municipal revenue

sharing. The city of Saskatoon alone has seen an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 161 per cent in municipal revenue sharing grants, taking that grant total from \$17 million in 2007 to \$46 million today. And when you include infrastructure capital grants, Saskatoon has received \$500 million since we had the privilege of forming government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We believe municipalities are in the best position to make decisions about and take responsibility for their parks and their conservation areas. But we do not take this decision lightly. When presented with all of the information, it was decided that the government would be reducing funding to the Meewasin Valley Authority. The Meewasin Valley Authority's allocation from the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will drop from \$909,000 to \$500,000 in 2017-18 for a savings to the government of \$409,000 over the last year. To do this, we have amended the Act to remove the subsection that deals with the provincial statutory funding and a section that deals with allocation of monies paid to the authority. My ministry will work with Meewasin to develop an agreement that covers this year's \$500,000 funding to be used to support conservation activities on the provincial Crown land.

The Meewasin Valley Authority Act also provides for statutory funding from the University of Saskatchewan. Although the Ministry of Advanced Education will provide targeted funding to the University of Saskatchewan for Meewasin this year, the subsection that deals with the University of Saskatchewan statutory funding has also been removed from the Act.

As a result of the removal of statutory funding requirements from the province and the University of Saskatchewan, it was also decided that the clause mandating one-third of all funding should be directed to trail and infrastructure expansion be removed to ensure that the Meewasin Valley Authority was afforded greater flexibility to direct grant funds as it sees fit.

Overall this bill provides greater flexibility for the province to provide funding as the fiscal environment allows while offering the Meewasin Valley Authority greater autonomy to direct funds to their priority areas.

To conclude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move second reading of *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport has moved that Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can hear some members opposite calling, you know, thinking that maybe we shouldn't have the debate on this bill, but I think it's a very important bill and it's one that's very indicative of the style of government that this government is engaging in here in Saskatchewan. And we can see that people from Saskatchewan, like I say, if they had seen some of this information a year ago before the election, we might have had a very different result. But it's coming out now in the wash, and now the people of Saskatchewan are recognizing exactly what's going on here.

The minister used the words “greater autonomy.” Now that is a slap in the face to the people of Saskatoon and to the Meewasin Valley Authority. That’s like saying, I’m taking away all of your allowance, but you can decide how you’re going to spend it. Mr. Speaker, that’s just shameful that he even has the audacity to use those words in the context of what’s happening within this bill.

Now I just took a look at the electoral boundaries for some of the members from Saskatoon, and the minister is from the riding of Silverspring-Sutherland. And if you take a look at the map . . . Oh no, that’s the member . . . [inaudible]. Sorry, I was thinking ahead. He’s the one that I was thinking would need to speak up then. He moved over to Willowgrove, I believe is the new riding. So he’s adjacent to Silverspring-Sutherland, his former area that he was responsible for a lot.

One of the things you look at, and I’m sure the member from Silverspring-Sutherland is aware of this and is hearing from people, is the northwest swale. That’s a very, very important part of the Meewasin Valley Authority. There are a number of people in Saskatchewan — or in Saskatoon, but in Saskatchewan as well — that are very concerned about the future of the northwest swale. It’s in a particularly important part of the Meewasin Valley in Saskatoon. And as it flows north of the city out beyond the city boundaries, and what you see in that swale, Mr. Speaker, it is the location of millennia ago, or many, many thousands of years ago, that was where the river flowed before it changed course to where it is now.

And the northwest swale, there’s a group of people that are very concerned about, the Northwest Swale Watchers. And I’m sure many members would be aware of the concerns that these people are raising within the city of Saskatoon, but also beyond the boundaries in terms of the importance of that ecosystem. It’s an ecosystem that’s very rare in Saskatchewan, and it’s one that needs protection. It very clearly needs protection, and with the sprawling of urban development as it grows further out in that direction, Mr. Speaker, that is threatening the integrity of that particular ecosystem.

So bring in the Meewasin Valley Authority. This is the authority that was designed to do the protection for that particular watershed. And we know that watershed’s important. We’ve heard that from this government many, many times. We know that the importance of the work they do doesn’t just relate to the ecosystem itself and the value of that valley, but what happens when people move into those valleys, what happens when people use those valleys for entertainment, for recreation.

We have things like the Beaver Creek along the other, on the other side of the city. We have the wonderful trail system that exists, the work that’s being done through Saskatchewan Trails, and the work of Cathy Watts from Saskatoon in terms of ensuring that these trails are protected and developed so that she, her family, her grandchildren, Olive and Hamish, that they have the opportunity to understand the importance of an ecosystem like the Meewasin Valley and the importance of protecting those types of ecosystems, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And as we know, the funding for this is a responsibility of all of us as Saskatchewan taxpayers, and it has been for many, many decades. So the concern is great. We kind of suspected this was

coming, Mr. Speaker. We saw the prelude last year in the budget when funding was cut for other authorities. For example, the Wakamow Valley in Moose Jaw, we had members there that didn’t bother to stand up for it, and now we have Saskatoon members that aren’t even wading into the conversation here.

[15:45]

I know there’s very high-ranking officials, both at Potash Corporation, and also I got a letter from an engineer at the synchrotron who moved to Saskatoon because of the particular protection and beauty of our Meewasin Valley, Mr. Speaker. So it’s definitely something that people are attracted to. I think it’s a real draw. And I think it’s really important that we show the people of Saskatchewan how important these urban parks are.

And again, Mr. Speaker, the cuts to Wakamow Valley and the Swift Current River Valley and also the one . . . I think there was a couple others that were impacted, Prince Albert as well. That just shows again, I think we’ve talked about this before, but you have to really question the moral compass of this government, Mr. Speaker. We need to talk about that more. The compass of this government has gone askew. And when we see increases to cuts for corporations, large corporations, when we see decreases to income tax for the richest people in this province, Mr. Speaker, when we have a Premier inviting companies to move here at peril of risking his own New West Partnership Agreement and he’s, you know, involved in those companies, Mr. Speaker, you’ve got to wonder where the moral compass of this government is.

And it’s something like, when you see cuts to this, I would like the minister to actually table the analysis that was done under the transformational change rubric. Is there like a checklist, Mr. Speaker? Does each program go through a checklist? Or is it just something to say, we like this and we don’t like that. We don’t like the grain cars. We don’t like the community pastures, and we don’t like the Meewasin Valley. So as far as transformational change goes, they’re out. We like large companies. We like our well-connected friends. And so, we like them, so in terms of transformational change, they’re in.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lack of a moral compass here. And it’s highly concerning for I think this side of the House for sure, but it’s also highly, highly concerning for all the people that are contacting me now about all the changes in this budget. Somebody said that reacting to this budget is like drinking from a firehose and, Mr. Speaker, that can’t be further from the truth. There is so much damage in this budget.

And this is a clear example from a member from Saskatoon who has said no to the Meewasin Valley Authority and the incredibly important work that they’ve done . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They’ve done it over and over again. And he’s yelling at me that I’m wrong, Mr. Speaker, but you know darn well that I’ve got the facts straight on this one. They are cutting \$500,000 from the budget, and in fact they’re changing the statutory obligation of the government. Let’s take a look at that section, just to make sure that we know what it used to say so that we can understand what changes are being made.

Currently under *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act*, there are three parties that are responsible for paying amounts to the

authority. We have in the case of the government, \$740,169; in the case of the city, Saskatoon, \$556,700; and in the case of the university, \$574,000.

Now let's take a look at how this section's going to look when the bill goes through, if it goes through, if they don't pull it before then. Of course we hope they will. The new section is going to read this: "In every fiscal year, the city shall pay \$556,700 to the authority." That's it, Mr. Speaker. Nothing in the statute anymore from this government. And they have said they'll voluntarily give some money this year, they're not cutting it all.

But mark my words, Mr. Speaker, let's see what happens next year when this government has to find the other \$600 million that they're going to be in deficit of. What do you think is going to happen, Mr. Speaker? Again the moral compass has gone awry. They're heading towards the South Pole, and they are not clearly thinking about what is important to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

I would like to know from that minister, from any MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Saskatoon, whether they heard people on the doorstep saying, you've got to cut the funding to the Meewasin Valley Authority? How many letters did they get? The member from Silverspring-Sutherland, did he get any letters or people on the doorstep saying, you know what, you've got to cut the funding to Meewasin Valley Authority? I don't think he heard that.

And I wonder about the member from Willowgrove or the other members across the way, perhaps Churchill-Wildwood heard that on the doorstep. I don't know, but I certainly didn't hear a single word. Every time I'm out in public it's about the importance of the Meewasin Valley Authority, the importance it plays in the character of the city but also as a valley authority protecting one of the most important watersheds in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So this move, this move by this government for \$740,000 is one I think that indicates the misdirection that we see. When we see a focus on enticing and bringing in companies from other provinces against the New West Trade Partnership, which we've heard the Premier go on and on about how wonderful it is . . . All of a sudden it's not so wonderful. You've got to wonder what the heck's going on over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This clause goes on to say a lot more than what the new bill says as well. It talks about how the funding is to be allocated through the three people, how the amounts are to be paid, what percentage each one is paying. And of course we know that the \$740,000 is 40 per cent, represents 40 per cent of that funding.

We've already seen Meewasin's value-for-dollar being cut from the 1970s significantly. And I've talked about that in the House before when the Minister of Finance was the Minister Responsible for Parks, Culture and Sport. And he kind of said, well that's too bad; cities are going to have to pick it up. That was his attitude, Mr. Speaker.

And we see that attitude being carried on by this current minister, from Saskatoon of all things, Mr. Speaker. We know

that he received a number of petitions from people that are very concerned about this. And did he table them in the House? Did he read them out loud, Mr. Speaker? No, he didn't because he doesn't want to talk about it. But if he thinks that people are asking for this, if any of the members from Saskatoon think people are asking for this, if any of these members think that this is something the people of Saskatchewan want, they are seriously out of touch with what the pulse of Saskatchewan people are, Mr. Speaker. And I think we're seeing that more and more and more.

And on the eve of the anniversary of the last election, I think the true colours are starting to come out, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's something that people of Saskatchewan are waking up to. And we certainly see that in the polling results that came out today. That's a good indication that people are starting to wake up to where the moral compass has gone awry with this government. This bill is an indication of everything that's going wrong over there, Mr. Speaker. It's an awful attack on the important role that the Meewasin Valley Authority's played for decades.

Even in the worst years of the '90s, we didn't see the government going after the Meewasin Valley Authority, and things were a heck of a lot worse in '92 than they were now, Mr. Speaker. And we know that, and they know that. And they like referring to those years disparagingly, Mr. Speaker. But if you look at what was going on then, compared to what is going on now and the amount of money that was coming in to the coffers, at no time did the moral compass waver, Mr. Speaker. And the Meewasin Valley Authority was protected and supported, and in fact there was additional money. There was supplementary funding that was being given to the Meewasin Valley . . . [inaudible] . . . to ensure that it was able to do the job for which it was created, Mr. Speaker.

And we see them walking away from that, and it's unacceptable. And they're going to hear about it, but sadly we've got to wait for three more years. That's the biggest problem that we have in front of us right now. If we had heard this a year ago in March, I can tell you they would be making different decisions today, Mr. Speaker, if they were even in government, Mr. Speaker. So for that, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They laugh. They think it's funny, Mr. Speaker, but when you're not straight with the people, and you don't come clean with them in terms of what your plans are, then there's going to be people that are very, very disappointed.

And I know, for example, some of the letters that these members are receiving. They're not talking about them, but I'm seeing them because they're being forwarded to me, Mr. Speaker. And they have a lot to think about, and it's not too late. It's not too late for them to change this bill. And I think we need to call upon them to reverse the impact of this bill even though the minister likes to chirp away from his seat, you know, but it's clear that they're removing the statutory limit. I don't think he can disagree with that because he's the one who just introduced the bill. And so if he can't stand up with this Meewasin Valley Authority and make it viable and able to do the role for which it was created, then I think he needs to have the courage to withdraw this bill and pull it off the order paper, Mr. Speaker.

So I know other of my colleagues are going to want to speak to this bill as well, but I certainly am not in favour of this bill. I think it's one of the worst moves this government has made, amongst many, unfortunately in this budget, Mr. Speaker, but we're stuck with it. And I think we're going to have a lot to say about it in the days that come, Mr. Speaker. So at this point, I'd like to move that we adjourn Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 55 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*. This Act comprises amendments to *The Crown Minerals Act; The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act, 2010*; and *The Mineral Taxation Act, 1983*.

The proposed amendments would set out identical terms and conditions under which penalty and interest on audit findings will be calculated and paid. This would be with respect to crude oil, natural gas, and minerals produced or delivered in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, any mineral, oil, and gas producers currently found to be non-compliant with the terms of the aforementioned Acts and their supporting regulations are upon audit findings assessed interest of prime plus 3 per cent. For refunds, interest is at prime. This is relevant to royalties of oil, gas, uranium, diamond, base and precious metals, and taxes on oil, gas, and potash.

For consistency, interest on audit findings on the remaining regulations for potash, coal, and sodium chloride Crown royalties, and coal and sodium chloride production tax is being updated to a rate of prime plus 3 per cent. As well, interest on refunds is being updated to prime.

In addition, this amendment will include an application of a penalty of 10 per cent of amounts found owing. Mr. Speaker, this penalty will be consistent with penalties associated with audit findings pursuant to other provincial statutes. It will also promote compliance with the royalty and tax laws intended to protect the revenue base for the Government of Saskatchewan. This would generate estimated incremental General Revenue Fund revenue of approximately \$4.5 million annually.

It should be emphasized, Mr. Speaker, that this is a penalty for not complying with the laws with respect to taxes or royalties owing.

In addition, upon coming into force on April 1st, 2017, these amendments would in fact bring Saskatchewan in line with the legislation currently in place in Manitoba and Alberta. Manitoba has legislation that allows for a 10 per cent penalty and interest at a rate of prime plus 6 per cent. Alberta has legislation that allows for a 10 to 50 per cent penalty in interest at a rate of prime plus 1 per cent.

Our proposed amendments reinforce the policy and regulatory environment in Saskatchewan that is regarded by the oil and gas and mineral resource industries among one of the best in the world. The evolution of our regulatory environment is undertaken with a mind to sustaining that reputation for clarity and consistency, and sustaining it at the highest standard possible. Ensuring that a consistent interest rate is applied on all audit assessments and refunds is a positive step and one that promotes increased integrity in the approach to regulation.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Energy and Resources has moved second reading of Bill No. 55. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm very pleased to offer initial comments as it pertains to Bill 55, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the minister made reference to on this particular bill, he mentions audits and he mentions royalties and the fact that there's penalties, and there's also interest being charged on those penalties and that they're going to derive something like 4 or \$5 million out of this whole audit process, Mr. Speaker.

It is important for the Saskatchewan people to know this, is that when they assumed government in 2007, Mr. Speaker, they had a royalty regime and a taxation system designed by the NDP to encourage oil and gas development. And, Mr. Speaker, we brought . . . The Government of Saskatchewan, at the time being led by Premier Calvert, brought the oil sector into Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of our history. And we're also very proud of the fact that we developed what I think was a very competitive royalty structure at that time. And, Mr. Speaker, we saw an unbridled investment into Saskatchewan's oil and gas sector. Many companies from Alberta moved over, Mr. Speaker, primarily because there was great discussion at the time in cabinet to make sure that we were able to bring in investment and, therefore, job creation and opportunity and certainly, Mr. Speaker, royalties into the provincial coffers so we're able to provide basic services and good services, whether it was health care or education.

[16:00]

And as we began to embark on that particular journey, Mr. Speaker, we began to see, and of course as I mentioned at the outset, investments. And we also saw that the job numbers are

going up, Mr. Speaker. And we can credit architects of that, of the whole royalty plan, Mr. Speaker, on people like Eldon Lautermilch, Mr. Speaker, on people like Eric Cline, Mr. Speaker, on people like Maynard Sonntag, on people like Andrew Thomson, Mr. Speaker, who sat in cabinet and had a great amount of discussion on how we can get the Alberta oil companies to come to Saskatchewan and help develop this nice solid opportunity under the oil and gas sector, Mr. Speaker. And that was all set up.

Calvert bought the oil and gas companies into Saskatchewan. We know that. The Saskatchewan Party inherited, Mr. Speaker, inherited a booming economy, a growing population, and money in the bank — and money in the bank. And the only thing the NDP asked at that time, the only thing that we asked at that time is we asked the current Saskatchewan Party, don't mess it up. Don't mess it up. That's all we said. Just simply inherit our policy. Follow the path blazed for you. Don't deviate, don't deviate from the messages. We'll even write out the messages for you because we didn't want to see any kind of, any kind of harm come to this relationship that it took years and years and years to establish, Mr. Speaker.

But here we go again. Now we're in this process as Bill 55 is at . . . They are so broke that they now have to go back and begin to audit some of these oil and gas companies, and if they find any money that's owing back to the government . . . There's also interest that, I think he said prime plus three.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we asked the Saskatchewan Party not to try and do things on their own when it came to the royalty regime that was established by the NDP. It served Saskatchewan well. They were the political benefactors of that particular work, granted. We'll certainly grant them that. But quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, one of the most bored guys on that side of the Assembly in 2007 was their Economy minister. Basically he had nothing to do because everything was all set up for him.

So now we sit here and we look at Bill 55, and the Sask Party has mismanaged our economy and our province so badly, they're now going after oil and gas companies to try and find any kind of dollars that they can wring out of these oil and gas companies, under audit, to try and help them recover the billion dollar deficit that they have put this province in this year, and many other years that they have been since government.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's two things that could have happened under this particular bill. Either the Saskatchewan Party is so desperate for cash that they'd go against oil and gas companies to try and find audits, or put audits on these companies to try and wring as many dimes and pennies off them as they possibly can, or the fact that there's no oversight to begin with by the Sask Party. Those two scenarios do not serve the oil and gas sector well, nor do they serve the people of Saskatchewan well. So the fact that (a) they could have had oversight, there's no oversight on this process; or quite frankly they need to wring out every penny they possibly can from a sector that has been invested in Saskatchewan for years and years and years.

So, Mr. Speaker, under this particular bill we have seen, we have seen a dereliction of duty when it comes to the Saskatchewan Party. From my perspective — I'll continue saying it as long as I'm sitting in this particular chair — they do

not know what they're doing on that side of the House. That's why it's important we get rid of them so we're able to have a government that's able to work with the oil and gas sector as proven in the past, so we're able to not have a process where there's no oversight or that you're going to try and wring every penny you possibly can out of an oil and gas company, Mr. Speaker.

This is an example of what could go wrong, and the people of Saskatchewan should not continue to pay for Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste, Mr. Speaker. And this is an example of how they have not done their job to make sure that they have a good relationship with the oil and gas sector because they simply can't figure it out on their own.

For a company that's supposed to be right wing . . . for a party that's supposed to be right wing, Mr. Speaker, the message is clear. Figure it out, get things done properly so the people of Saskatchewan will see that you're getting things done properly, and work with the oil and gas sector. What is so difficult about those directions? And finally we said, the number one message we gave them — don't mess it up. That's all you had to do is not mess it up.

Just follow the trail blazed for you by the NDP and you'll do well. But they couldn't do it. They couldn't do it. And here's yet another example of how the minister now says we're going to try and wring every penny off the oil and gas companies we possibly can, and we're going to tax them. If there's something wrong, we're going to charge them interest.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good relationship building with the oil and gas sector. That from our perspective, from the NDP perspective, we know we need their investment and we know we need their partnership. And we know that there are certain things that we have to work with the oil and gas sector on, and one of them is of course protecting the environment. That's pretty darn important for everybody in this particular province, except the Sask Party simply doesn't get it.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are certain things that partners have to agree on. And, Mr. Speaker, having a good, cordial relationship with the oil and gas sector is number one, Mr. Speaker, understanding that we will develop the resource together but the environmental integrity cannot be compromised in any way. But that is how partnerships are built. So I'll say once again, once again to the Sask Party: don't mess it up. All the work was done for you. Simply follow the formula and things will be okay. But when you start bringing in bills of this sort that'll really begin to focus negative attention on the oil and gas sector, that's messing it up, Mr. Speaker. And making sure that there's no partnership approach on environmental protection, that's messing it up, Mr. Speaker.

So once again I can say there's a lot of people much more informed on this particular bill that'll have many, many more things to say on this particular bill, Bill 55, so on that note I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 55.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 55. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 56 — *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*. This Act addresses several changes regarding the well levy introduced in 2014 to recover 90 per cent of the costs of oil and gas regulation in Saskatchewan.

First, the number of licensees subject to the levy will be expanded to include the holders of licences issued under *The Pipelines Act, 1998*. Second, the well levy will be renamed the administrative levy to reflect its broader application to both wells and pipelines.

In addition to these changes, amendments will establish regulation-making authority for the purposes of calculating the annual administrative levy assessed against well licensees and pipeline licensees. Consultations with industry on the supporting regulations which implement the changes to the administrative levy will occur over the next few months for implementation this year.

These changes are part of a number of initiatives included in the 2017-18 budget that continue the trend of strengthening oil and gas regulation in Saskatchewan. The new administrative levy for licensed pipelines will directly support the implementation of the multi-year pipeline regulation enhancement program. This is in addition to the ongoing regulatory activities related to pipeline approvals and inspections.

The introduction of a levy on licensed pipelines will partially shift the cost burden tied to the annual assessment from well licensees to pipeline licensees. This will ensure the regulatory costs are fairly distributed within the industry.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate that continued public confidence in the oil and gas regulatory system is central to the continued growth and development of Saskatchewan and our oil and gas industry. We also place a high priority on maintaining Saskatchewan's excellent standing with global industry as a jurisdiction of choice for investment and development.

This is a province which is open to investment, values our stakeholders, and strives to hold our regulatory role to the highest possible standards. The proposed amendments before us today are integral to these efforts. Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Energy and Resources has moved second reading of Bill No. 56. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I

want to preface on my comments that it's been, it's certainly been a great opportunity for me to see the connect between Bill 55 and this particular bill, Bill 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*.

And I wanted to explain to the Sask Party caucus across the way the importance of when I mentioned partnerships at my concluding remarks around Bill 55. One of the things that the people of Saskatchewan want — and I think it's pretty important and pretty basic that we share what I believe they want — number one is that a lot of people need mortgage-paying jobs. People that are out there, that are raising their families, they want a roof over their children's heads. They want their children to go to a school. They want to be safe and comfortable in their community. These are basic things that the people of Saskatchewan have always maintained and have always wanted, Mr. Speaker. And that goes right across the province as well.

Many families in northern Saskatchewan have the same aspiration. They also have the same desires for their children. And as I often mention, this Saskatchewan is a great province. And there are Saskatchewan people all throughout the province — north, east, west, and south — that do a remarkable job of contributing to overall health of our province and certainly the overall health of our population.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, we want to be able to attract investment to our province. We have maintained that from day one. As an opposition party, when we were in government, Mr. Speaker . . . And you look at the history of Saskatchewan under the robust economic times of Saskatchewan's history, the NDP were certainly in charge of what was going on in the province. And they brought forward a very good economy, Mr. Speaker.

There's no question in my mind, in many people's minds throughout the province, that the Saskatchewan Party simply inherited a booming population, a solid economy, and money in the bank. They had absolutely nothing to do with the groundwork that was done prior to their arrival. They are simply benefactors.

Now everybody knew that in the province everywhere you go, Mr. Speaker. All walks of life, they say . . . And I think the Saskatchewan Party in their deep mind know, the Saskatchewan Party know, Mr. Speaker, that they inherited a booming economy and they inherited a growing population and there was money in the bank. They didn't do anything to get it, Mr. Speaker; they just came in at the right time. And the people of Saskatchewan all throughout the province, they all know that.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, it's important for the NDP to teach the so-called right wing party called the Saskatchewan Party what you should not do. Selling off the Crowns, you should not do that. Forgetting about the vulnerable people, you should not do that. Winding down STC, you should not do that, Mr. Speaker. Penalizing the working men and women in the province, you should not do that, Mr. Speaker. Putting in a carbon capture levy on all our power bills, you should not do that, Mr. Speaker. Working with the oil and gas sector in developing a solid partnership, yes, you should do that. We're telling them that they should do that.

Secondly is that, in the relationship-building process with the oil and gas sector, the people of Saskatchewan also want to make sure that the land is protected. I think the oil and gas companies recognize that as well. And that's why it's important, when you look at the process of the pipelines necessary to move our oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at a well levy that's being implemented under Bill 56, and you're looking at the phrase being replaced to "administrative levy," well, Mr. Speaker, what this is is primarily a tax grab for the Saskatchewan Party.

It is not going to be utilized to make sure that there are good checks and measures and balances in place between the partnership developed by the province of Saskatchewan and the oil and gas sector. You've got to have these checks and balances. It's all part of a healthy relationship with the industry, Mr. Speaker. We understand that on this side of the House.

So my point being is that in Bill 56, as you put an administrative levy, my message to the Sask Party is that administrative levies should not be construed as a tax grab for you guys to put in your deep, dark hole called a deficit that you created through your own mismanagement, that those levies should be used to ensure that there is environmental integrity being placed at the foresight of any project that you want to get into as a partnership between the oil and gas sector and the province of Saskatchewan.

So as you look at some of these processes, you don't simply say to the partner, you look after your own environmental work that's necessary; we just want the administrative levy so we can put it into the deep, dark recesses of our deficit, Mr. Speaker. Because that doesn't work good. The partners don't like that notion of paying a levy, and it not being used to mitigate things such as environmental issues that might come back to haunt these companies later on.

So it's important to know that anything you do for the economy, there has always got to be the balancing performance as it pertains to the environment. The people of Saskatchewan like that full gambit of making sure that there's environmental integrity and protection as well as stimulating economic opportunity for the province.

So we look at some of the contents of this bill, Mr. Speaker. Again, again the Saskatchewan Party simply doesn't get it. They just don't know what they're doing, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

They're asking the industry to police themselves when it comes to pipeline inspections, Mr. Speaker, but they're also charging them a levy. And whether it's an administrative levy or a well levy or a pipeline levy, whatever levy that they have in mind, they are so broke they need to collect as much cash as they possibly can. So what does that do to the partnership with industry? Well the industry probably is not too happy with some of the levies that are being put in place.

And, Mr. Speaker, you look at also the fact when you look at the whole notion of the environmental protection. Well the public wouldn't like that either if there was no consideration for environmental protection. So it's always a critical, crucial

balancing act, Mr. Speaker. All the time jobs are really important and jobs really drive the agenda in many people's minds, including mine, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really important we look at the job issues.

But there are other compelling arguments, that under the environmental front we've got to have a good solid partnership, and there's got to be good checks and balances. And what is wrong with that common sense, middle-of-the-road approach, Mr. Speaker? I say that there's nothing, there is nothing wrong with that position and that's why it's important we establish a relationship with the oil and gas sector so they keep coming here, that they keep staying here, and that we don't have to sell the house to keep them here, Mr. Speaker.

We just have to have a respectful relationship that each partner recognizes and therefore they endorse and they support. And once you have a good clear understanding and there's no surprises, I think the oil and gas sector would be better served if we had that approach as opposed to having a piecemeal approach, as we witnessed by the Premier writing letters to try and attract oil and gas companies here, offering them tons of incentives that's going to cost the Saskatchewan people money.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if we do a good partnership and consummate that partnership with some good, solid, respectful relationship building, I think that's probably the better way to go, but at the same time you don't ever affect the integrity of your environmental argument because that's pretty sound as well. And I think the people of Saskatchewan would like that approach.

So again you look at this as simply a tax grab, and if all it is is a grab, a financial grab for the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, then I say shame on them because they simply can't figure this out on their own, and that these levies and the language here in this particular bill will probably hurt industry over time but not achieve the objectives of having environmental monitoring, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan would also like to see when it comes to bills of this sort. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, we have many more of our caucus members that will be speaking on this bill at greater length so I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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 Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again this all pertains to our particular argument around Bill 56 and Bill 55, which I spoke at great length about, the importance of the collaboration of all the Acts and all the activities of government.

Again, from the NDP perspective I think it's important that we point out to the people of Saskatchewan, we want to attract investment. We want to see oil and gas come and excite the economies of our communities. We think it's a great opportunity. We've shown that historically, that we are good stewards of that particular message and that there's no question that investment in our province is very welcome under an NDP government in the past and certainly into the future.

All the while, Mr. Speaker, I talk about establishing relationships that are very solid and very understanding and very respectful of each other. Environmental stewardship is a role that the province should play, and certainly to ensure that there isn't any challenges to the environment that are so great that it would affect many people's lives. It is obviously a balancing act, so I think it's important that we continue that train of thought as it pertains to this bill.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think other people will be speaking to this bill as we move it forward. So I thank you for your time and certainly entertaining my comments around Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016*.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016* be designated to the Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Bill No. 44

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

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as always, it's my honour to be able to rise in the House today to debate the bills that are being brought forward by this government.

Bill 44 is an Act that I think is designed to complement some regulations that were brought in in August 2015 to deal with some very significant issues this province is facing regarding drainage. And certainly since I was elected in 2011, Mr. Speaker, I would say this is the most common issue of concern that's been raised to me as the Environment critic but also, Mr. Speaker, as the Agriculture critic because this bill actually impacts producers in a very significant way.

And although the Minister of the Environment is the one who's introduced the bill, I think it really impacts the areas relating to the Minister of Agriculture's sphere much more than it does to the Minister of the Environment. And I think that could be evidenced, and I'm sure if we could get a little peek at the Minister of Agriculture's log we would see the number of complaints and concerns that have been raised about the way this bill is being brought forward and the impact it's going to have on producers.

And certainly I do want to share some of those comments today that I've been getting, and there's a number of concerns within the bill itself that I think . . . This isn't me making this up, Mr. Speaker. This is bodies like SARM and the Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association who are very concerned about some of what they call draconian measures that are found in this bill.

Now I don't want to underemphasize the importance of finding a solution for drainage. We know that this is a problem that has plagued producers and communities for a long time and certainly very drastically in the last few years. If you look at the PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] payments that have gone to people who have been affected by flooding, you know, certainly when it comes to homes and when it comes to businesses, there's assistance available.

But when you look at something like the Quill lakes watershed, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that that is impacting producers in an incredibly negative way. The amount of entire quarter sections that are now under water in that closed basin, Mr. Speaker, is affecting a large number of producers.

But Bill 44 will have an adverse impact on other producers, and I think that's something that the minister has indicated he would take a look at even. When concerns were raised, SARM, Minister Moe . . . or the Minister of the Environment. I apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. The Minister for the Environment has said that he wants to take another look at some of the bills. And now we haven't received any notice. We have seen no indication from the minister as of yet in terms of what amendments he might be willing to make. And certainly we'll have some of those comments available, or hopefully we'll have some of that discussion when we get into committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I think it's important that, like the producers . . . I'm just going to share some comments I've received from one producer from the Quill lakes area, and this is what he is telling me. He says:

We've been working with the RM of Lakeside and surrounding RMs on this issue, and they introduced a resolution to rescind Bill 44 at the SARM convention. We are also working with the Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association who are trying to have Bill 44 rescinded or amended.

He goes on to say:

For governments to say that all prior farm land drainage is illegal and must now be approved and filled in is wrong. Governments past and present have not only funded some of this drainage, they made them legal by standing by and doing nothing. We need sustainable laws where permanent water should not be drained by farmers or special interest groups. It's time government started to listen to farmers instead of special interest groups.

As for the Quill Lake situation, there is strong historical evidence that this lake was almost this high, and it ran out — all of this without drainage. The natural outlet has been changed with the building of railways and highways.

As for private farm land that has been flooded around the lake by government inaction, there definitely should be compensation. Agriculture has been and will continue to be the leading economic driver of this province but only if governments do not put us at a disadvantage with overregulation and draconian legislation.

Those are strong words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that producers are not saying that illegal drainage is right. I mean, obviously, illegal drainage is not right, but I think that producers have not been consulted properly on the impact of this bill. Some of the concerns this particular producer has, he says if you deem there's no outlet, then the people in the Quill lakes are hooped, basically, Mr. Speaker. There will be no option for them to ever get their farm land back, so the no-outlet clause is of concern.

There's no right for litigation anymore. Under this bill, the government can't be sued. If farmers lose their entire farm because of this bill, they will not be able to sue the government for losses. And I think compensation is something that producers are looking for. When you're removing the 1981 arbitrary cut-off, and you're going back to when the lands were broke . . . He told me stories of an elderly woman who wants to sell her farm, but she's been, received a notice that she needs to push water back onto her land. And she's going to lose about a hundred acres, so that's very concerning to this particular producer. She's elderly and ready to retire and there's no compensation for her. So that's something that I don't think . . . I'm not sure where the Minister of Agriculture's going to weigh in on this. It would be helpful maybe if he came to committee and indicated how producers are going to be assisted with the fairly draconian impacts of this bill.

And, yes, the other point which he raised in the email that I read is that for up to a hundred years some of these illegal drainage activities have been approved simply by omission, by failure to act by previous governments, by governments over the last hundred years. So it's difficult now for producers to understand how they will be called upon to lose productive land.

Now on the other hand of the discussion, Mr. Speaker — and I have to talk a little bit about this as well — is the impact on our wetlands. And we know the importance of wetlands in Saskatchewan, and we know the importance of productive land. So this is a very difficult situation and I think one that needs balance.

Getting rid of the Water Appeal Board under this bill is a concern as well, Mr. Speaker. And I think we've seen farmers pitted against farmers before and we know that we need to understand how the new regulations are working. We also know that Water Security Agency is highly understaffed and doesn't have the requisite people that they need to be able to respond adequately to all the concerns that arise when we are in a wet hydrology cycle, Mr. Speaker.

I just received a letter recently, to the minister, regarding the Kingsley conservation and development authority drainage ditch, and this is near Kipling. It was constructed in 1956 and it was an important component of local infrastructure. The ditch has not been maintained and there's a lot of pollutants and silt that are now flowing into Pipestone Lake. And the person that's writing this letter is saying that the damage is a direct result of the local conservation and development authority being allowed to de-engineer the project and remove all flow structures within it. Then in summer 2016 the local C & D [conservation and development area authority] approved with and the provincial Water Security Agency permitted new drainage into this situation. And this individual says, "In my view that is wrong. This is neither an example of managed drainage nor is it an example of sustainable environmental management."

So I have to say I do get a lot of producers' concern, people that are being impacted on both sides if, you know, water is flowing down onto their land. I've had a number of people calling with concerns about that and it not being addressed properly, and also this new bill which will cause people to retain water that hasn't been on their land for the last 100 years or 120 years or from the day the lands were broke.

So it's a fairly . . . From the producers' perspective, I think it's being seen as a very draconian piece of legislation. I do hope that the Minister of Environment will take that into account in terms of adjustments that are being asked for but, on the other hand, we need to ensure that our wetlands are protected. And the current drainage that's happening now, I mean you could see it when you drive between Moose Jaw and Regina, Mr. Speaker. Those illegal actions are illegal and it's happening now. And if we can't handle what's happening now, I'm not sure that going back to 1920 or 1930 will be of much assistance for producers.

So I think let's deal with the problems we have before us. We need to ensure wetlands are maintained properly but we also need to ensure that producers who are losing large parts of their productive land right now will be able to at least find some way to make up for that loss. And there's probably a few ways that it could be done. I think the government needs to be a little more aggressive and directed, I guess, or determined to deal with the both sides of the issue. And I'm not saying it's an easy one, but I think it's one that's very important, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

Now I'm going to have a lot of questions for the minister when we do get a chance to get into committee and just get a better understanding of how they came to the decisions like getting rid of the Water Appeal Board, for example. I think that was something that was seen as a useful tool and a deterrent that would hopefully cause people to think twice before they had decided to undertake improper drainage without proper approvals.

But I think this bill is being seen by many producers as going a little bit too far. And I think the minister undertook to review that at the SARM convention just last month. So until we know exactly what the minister has in mind, it's going to be difficult to see whether or not this is an adequate response or not. But I do look forward to those discussions in committee. I suspect he may have a couple of amendments that we need to look at in committee as well, so we'll have to have the questions and the debate at that time, Mr. Speaker.

So I think at this point in time, I'm going to reserve any further comment until we are in committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 44, the water security amendment Act, 2016 be committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:32.]

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Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

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

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
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Capital Commission
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

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Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation