



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

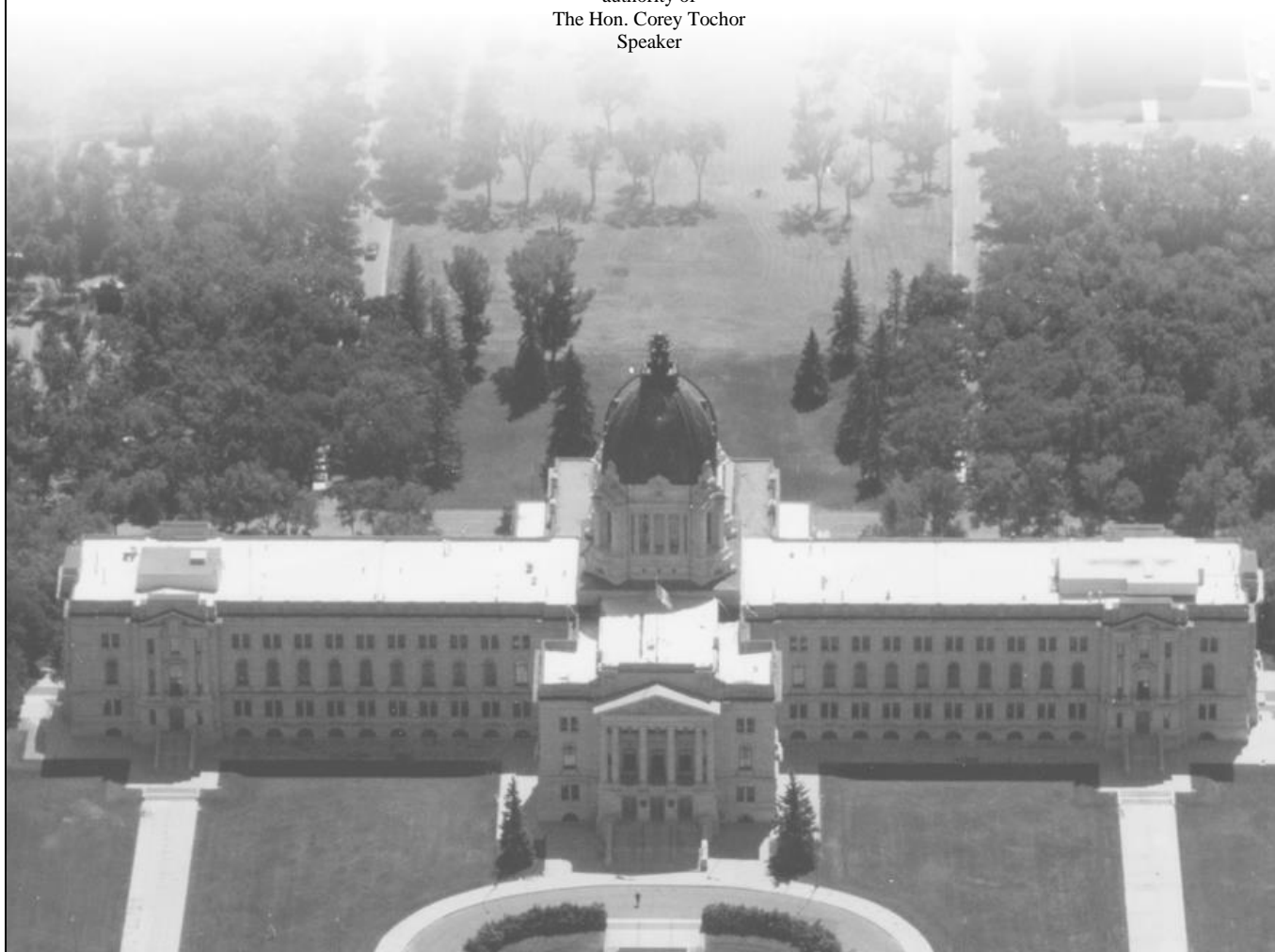
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
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The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a number of guests in your gallery, individuals who are literally building the province. We had the opportunity yesterday to kick off the first annual Saskatchewan Construction Week at a great event here in Regina, and there's a number of individuals who have joined us from the Saskatchewan Construction Association, many of whom also are very distinguished business people in their own right.

I see Mark Cooper, the executive director of the SCA [Saskatchewan Construction Association Inc.]; Karen Low, executive director, Merit Contractors; Cory Richter, vice-president of Quorex Construction services; Stu Niebergall, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of Regina & Region Home Builders' Association; Matt Walker, sales rep from Lehigh Cement; Ken Swann, president, Interwest Mechanical.

And I know those were the individuals that met with the caucus policy committee on the economy this morning. I know there's many other individuals in the gallery who also were here meeting with ministers and with members of the legislature. So I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these distinguished individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to join with the minister here today, it's my pleasure to welcome these leaders within construction to their Assembly and to thank them for their role within this very, very important industry, a key driver within our economy and an industry that truly does build Saskatchewan. And we are joined by literally the builders of Saskatchewan here today.

So on behalf of a grateful opposition, on behalf of a grateful province, I say thank you to each and every one of you that are here today. We're looking forward to the meetings later here today, and we're looking forward to all the activities through Construction Week that celebrates this incredibly important industry to our province. So I say thank you to those that have joined us here today and thank you to the thousands and thousands and thousands that work day after day in this industry, that help build Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to acknowledge a constituent of mine, Mr. Wally Andrews, who is seated in your gallery with his wife, Beth, and one of his daughters, Delise, and her husband, Mark

Pitman. Wally has had two honours bestowed upon him recently — first, the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal in which he was recognized as having a long service in protecting Saskatchewan people and property and ensuring their safety, security, and protection; and secondly, the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal, which recognizes Canadian fire service providers who have completed long-time service and at least 10 years of that have been served in the performance of duties involving potential risks.

For 40 years, Wally has volunteered with the Pense Fire Department and served as fire chief for many of those years. Wally has seen the devastation that fire brings to both property and, on two sad occasions, the loss of life.

Wally also spent his years as a charter member of the Pense and District Lions Club and was a member on the village council for several years. Currently Wally remains active in the community by being a member of the Pense Legion as well as remaining with the fire department in a lesser role.

Mr. Speaker, Wally Andrews is a leader in our community, and I ask all members to join me in congratulating Wally on his accomplishments, thank him for his service, and welcome him and his family members to their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition I just want to join with the member in recognizing Wally Andrews and the service that he has given the province, Mr. Speaker, over these many, many years. We want to say thank you on behalf of the official opposition.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say hello to Mark Pitman, who's somebody I've had the pleasure to work alongside and to know the great impact that Mark has in the work that he does in lots of different areas. But my experience with Mark was when he was working at the North Central Community Association, particularly with the Good Neighbour construction company. And the kind of difference that he made in a lot of young lives, I witnessed first-hand, Mr. Speaker. So it's good to see Mark here, and again congratulations, Mr. Andrews, on a tremendous contribution. Thank you.

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all the members a group of grade 10 students in the west gallery. They're from F.W. Johnson Collegiate here in Regina. There's 32 of them here today, take up almost the whole gallery. It's great to see their teachers once again, Mr. Scott McKillop, assistants Ted Hastings and Nicole Herbert, and some interns as well, Jordyn Leib and Rachel Jay. I look forward to having a conversation with them after routine proceedings. All members help me welcome them, please.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again to present a petition opposing the Sask Party's cuts to spiritual care. The petitioners are concerned that this government does not actually know what spiritual care providers, professional spiritual care providers do, nor the impact that they have, Mr. Speaker.

The petitioners point out that in this budget the Sask Party has eliminated funding for pastoral care services which provided spiritual care within Saskatchewan's health facilities; that Saskatchewan will be the only province within Canada to not fund this support for patients, residents, and their families seeking wellness. They point out that the Sask Party hid their plan to scrap funding for spiritual care within health region facilities during the 2016 election, Mr. Speaker, and 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 providers support 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 Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, a federally imposed carbon tax really has no effect on carbon reduction. It's simply a tax, a tax that would have a detrimental effect on our provincial economy, making Saskatchewan products less than competitive on the world market, especially when no carbon tax is being imposed on competitive industries just across the border.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan agriculture has taken initiatives that have greatly reduced emissions and the development of the carbon capture facilities in Boundary dam has further reduced Saskatchewan's carbon footprint. But a federal-imposed carbon tax would significantly damage the Saskatchewan economy.

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 of Moose Jaw, Aylesbury, Caron, Kuroki, Regina, Drinkwater, and Crane Valley. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm rising again to present a petition that's opposed to Bill 40 and a potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The people who have signed the petition want to bring to our attention the following: that the Sask Party's Bill 40 creates a new definition for privatization that allows the government to wind down, dissolve, or sell up to 49 per cent of the shares of a Crown corporation without holding a referendum; that in 2015-16 alone, Saskatchewan's Crown corporations returned almost \$300 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors.

Our Crown corporations employ thousands of people across the province and 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 being held by a government or a province. The Sask Party's proposal would allow up to 49 per cent of a Crown to be sold without being considered privatized, and this short-sighted legislation therefore risks sending millions of our Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than the people of Saskatchewan.

I'll 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 these petitions today are from the cities of Regina and Saskatoon and the communities of Bjorkdale and Archerwill. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition concerning pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the undersigned residents of the province want to bring to our attention the following: that the citizens of this province believe in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity; and that all women should be paid equitably; and that women are powerful drivers of economic growth and their economic empowerment benefits us all. And we know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016, women earned on average 63 cents for every dollar a man makes, and in Regina women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar a man makes. According to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes.

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

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

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

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present to you a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mobile crisis is a bridge to mainstream services. Mobile crisis services performs a community triage function, acting as a point of entry for people into various service systems. Crisis counsellors perform thorough assessments and make referrals, helping people secure needed resources. This ensures that people utilize the right service specific to their problem rather than assessing more expensive or inappropriate service systems.

Prince Albert mobile crisis has had to close its doors during the daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide the counselling and intervention services to clients.

I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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

Mr. Speaker, there's individuals across the province who have signed these petitions, and this particular petition was signed by individuals from Saskatoon, La Ronge, and Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition regarding library cuts in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the people who have been circulating this petition have been doing an incredible job getting the word out and countering a lot of misinformation and falsehoods that have been circulated about this. They want to draw attention to the good work that libraries are doing in the province, and they want people to know just how devastating this 58 per cent cut is to the regional library program in the province, Mr. Speaker, up to and including what we've already seen have been layoffs. And I know that some of those people were here in the Assembly

yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

More layoffs to come, potentially branch closures, and of course today the latest, the interlibrary loans program has been the latest casualty, Mr. Speaker. These are people that are very upset about these cuts and the impacts that are yet to come.

So I will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling on this government to restore funding to post-secondary education. Mr. Speaker, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Sask Party is making students and their families pay for Sask Party financial mismanagement. They point out that Saskatchewan students already pay the second-highest tuition fees in Canada, Mr. Speaker. That of course comes from the good people at Statistics Canada, though I know they don't like it over there, Mr. Speaker.

They point out that this budget cuts \$36.8 million from post-secondary education, that this budget cuts \$6.4 million from technical institutions. They point out that funding for the Saskatchewan Student Aid Fund and scholarships has been cut by \$8.2 million, Mr. Speaker. And they point out that the Sask Party has broken a 2016 election promise by cancelling their first home plan.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners respectfully request:

That the Government of Saskatchewan immediately restore funding to Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions and stop the damaging cuts to our students.

Mr. Speaker, this particular set of petitions is signed by good citizens from Saskatoon. 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 follows them to

work. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. 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 violence in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing the petition today come from Moose Jaw. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again under the direction and the call for action to support the member from Prince Albert Northcote, where she asked for anyone in the Assembly to support her in her request for a second bridge, I stand proudly with my colleague, the member from Prince Albert Northcote, to present a petition on a second bridge for Prince Albert, and, Mr. Speaker, that the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and the businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution.

So therefore, 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 to begin immediately to plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated time and time again, we stand up in this Assembly day after day presenting page after page of this petition, and on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, that I'm presenting, the people that have signed this page are primarily from Moose Jaw. And I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Construction Week

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of the Economy joined representatives from more than 20 industry associations and business support groups to officially launch the first ever Saskatchewan Construction Week. This week is a celebration of the important economic and social contributions made by the province's second-largest private sector employer.

Mr. Speaker, there are roughly 8,000 construction-based businesses operating in our province, representing more than 51,000 employees — the same as manufacturing, mining, oil

and gas, and forestry combined. These workers collectively earn approximately \$3 billion in wages each year, with earnings 27 per cent higher than the provincial average for all industries. In addition, it is a sector that makes up 8 per cent of our entire province's GDP [gross domestic product].

Mr. Speaker, construction matters to Saskatchewan. It provides good, well-paying jobs and facilitates growth across every other segment of our economy. It provides the corridors that connect our goods to market, the homes we live in, the world-class spaces to educate our children, and the infrastructure that spurs innovation. I had the pleasure, along with several of my colleagues, to meet with some representatives from the industry this morning where we had productive conversations about the industry's bright future in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the people and businesses that help build Saskatchewan every day, and in recognizing the inaugural Saskatchewan Construction Week. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the first ever Saskatchewan Construction Week, which has been proclaimed for April 3rd through April 7th. This is an important week that celebrates the important economic and social contributions made by the province's second-largest private sector employer. This week has been designated to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of tradespeople, entrepreneurs, industry partners — literally the builders of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Saskatchewan construction industry contributes immensely to our community and our economy. Construction creates valued infrastructure and valued jobs, providing great career choices for so many. Eight thousand Saskatchewan-based businesses are involved in the construction sector, from large general contractors to building-material suppliers and small businesses right across our province.

As was noted, in 2016 alone there were over 51,000 people employed in the sector, more than manufacturing, oil and gas, and forestry combined. Saskatchewan construction companies paid an estimated \$3.3 billion in wages and salaries to their employees.

Mr. Speaker, we'd like to thank the title sponsors and all those involved for making this week happen, and ask all members to join with me in celebrating the first ever Saskatchewan Construction Week and in thanking all of those involved in this valued industry who literally build Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

13th Annual World Class Players Cup Held in Regina

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past Thursday I had the honour of bringing greetings at the opening ceremony of the 13th Annual Mosaic World Class Players Cup soccer tournament held here in Regina.

The tournament is held at the Credit Union EventPlex and runs from March 30th to April 15th. Mr. Speaker, 1,200 soccer players from more 70 teams representing 32 countries will compete over the course of 17 days. The tournament is geared towards players of all ages and abilities, from adults to teenagers, to children younger than 12 years of age, as well as a Special Olympics team.

Mr. Speaker, this tournament brings together a multicultural array of people, people who live, work, and play together in Saskatchewan, but who come from a multitude of nationalities. Bringing people together to engage in friendly competition helps us recognize and celebrate our province's diversity. It is a wonderful thing to see young people from so many different countries, passionately playing a sport loved by billions of people around the globe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in thanking the sponsors and over 100 volunteers who made this tournament possible. I'd also like to congratulate the Regina Multicultural Council and the organizers of the World Class Players Cup for all the success of the tournament. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Three Minute Thesis Competition at University of Saskatchewan

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday I was honoured to help judge the University of Saskatchewan's third annual Three Minute Thesis Competition. Mr. Speaker, 3MT is a celebration of grad students and their research. It showcases their innovative ideas in a way that engages the community. 3MT began at the University of Queensland in 2008. Since then it has gained popularity worldwide, and is now held across 350 universities in 58 countries.

Mr. Speaker, judging 3MT served as a great opportunity to experience both the ingenuity and diversity of our grad students. With thesis topics ranging from exploring the child transition of immigrants in Canada through picture books, to exterminating insects in wheat without using chemical methods, the work that our graduate students are performing is not only diverse, it's the kind of research that will drive the future of our province. Winners of the competition included Brian Kulyk in third place, Shailza Sapal in second place, and Renbo Xu taking first place with the thesis of the addition of nutritional value to low-fat meat products.

On April 28th the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] will host the 3MT winners from across Western Canada to compete in the Western regional finals, and I will be cheering for these bright students as they continue on.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to join me in thanking the University of Saskatchewan's Graduate Students' Association for organizing this fun and insightful event, and in congratulating all participants for their hard work and our winners for moving on to the Western regional finals. Thank you.

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

Campbell Senior Boys' Basketball Team Wins Title

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to announce that last weekend the Campbell senior boys' basketball team won the provincial 5A basketball title in the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association tournament.

Mr. Speaker, the Tartans beat the LeBoldus Golden Suns, another great school in my constituency. This further cemented a great athletics rivalry between the two great schools in Regina University. Tyrese Potoma of the Campbell Tartans was the leading scorer of the game with 23 points.

Mr. Speaker, this game was actually a rematch for the Golden Suns and Tartans, as they had previously faced each other in the city final championship one week earlier; however, that game had a very different outcome. The Golden Suns were triumphant in that match, beating the Tartans 96-72 in the Regina Intercollegiate Basketball League's tier 1 final on March 17th. After a good week of practice and refocusing under the tutelage of head coach Will Redl, the Tartans were able to pull it off and, Mr. Speaker, they could not be more deserving.

Mr. Speaker I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Campbell Tartans senior boys' basketball team on their 5A provincial title, as well as the LeBoldus Golden Suns, on a great game. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

International Wood Collectors Society Honours Saskatchewan Resident

Ms. Young: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in this Assembly today to acknowledge a constituent who has received a special honour from the IWCS, the International Wood Collectors Society. The IWCS is the world's leading authority on distributing, collecting, identifying, and naming wood samples globally. The society has members from almost every country around the world.

Mr. Gordon Friedrich of Marshall, Saskatchewan is one of the longest-serving members in the world. Gordon was recently featured in the society's bimonthly magazine *World of Wood*. He joined the society in the early '60s where he indicated that he had a love of trees, wood, and conservation.

The last 50 years of his life, career, and hobbies have revolved around wood collecting and conserving some of the most unique trees in the world, as well as furniture building and refinishing. Throughout his life, he has also taken every opportunity possible to teach others about the importance of forests and woodlands.

As a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Gordon distributes 800 to 1,000 Colorado blue spruce saplings to schools each year. In Saskatchewan the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Rebekahs have planted and given out over 300,000 trees in the last six years.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Gordon Friedrich on his long service to the IWCS and wish him the best as he inspires others in his love of

trees, wood, and conservation. Thank you.

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

New Schools in Saskatoon

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to highlight this government's commitment to our education system with the near completion of two more new schools in my constituency.

In addition to the two new Willowgrove schools which opened very recently, Dr. Sylvia Fedoruk, Saskatoon Public; and St. Nicholas, Saskatoon Catholic are the two new schools in Evergreen. They are both wonderful facilities and will be home to 800 students and 90 child care centre spaces when they open this September.

Evergreen has seen amazing growth over the past several years, Mr. Speaker, growing by some 4,000 people since 2013. Much of the new housing in the Willowgrove constituency is filled by young families and young children who will benefit from increased access to schools and a child care facility. The surrounding schools will see benefits ranging from smaller classroom sizes to less pressure on resources. This new joint-use school will also benefit the community as a whole with access to a fitness centre and a community resource centre. These facilities will be available to the public after regular school hours, providing a real pillar for those growing communities.

[14:00]

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 schools and vastly reducing the number of teachers. Mr. Speaker, our government is meeting the challenge and will continue to ensure that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, raise a family, and go to school. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Auditor's Report and Details of Land Transactions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's been a year since Saskatchewan people went to the polls, but they're no longer trusting what the Sask Party had to say during that campaign of just a year ago.

Just look at the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal alone. Two wealthy and well-connected donors to that party made out with \$11 million of taxpayers' money. During the election, the Premier told the people of Saskatchewan time and time again that there was nothing to see. He said that he had an appraisal that justified the scandalous deal and scandalous and outrageous price tag; if only, of course, he could actually show us that appraisal, Mr. Speaker. But of course he's failed to do that and failed to answer simple, straightforward questions on

the floor of this Assembly time after time.

We know now that, from the scathing auditor's report that exonerated no one, that the appraisal wasn't even considered by government, nor should have it ever been considered by government. So a year later, I guess the question is to the Deputy Premier here today. Why did the Premier of Saskatchewan tell the people of our province that the appraisal would clear everything up when it had nothing to do with it? Why wasn't he straight with Saskatchewan people? And why won't he be straight with Saskatchewan people now?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course as members well know, on both sides of the aisle, the auditor looked into this matter in great detail. The auditor had access to all of the documents which she requested access to. The auditor was able to talk to all of the individuals to whom she wished to speak. The auditor, by her own testimony, did a very thorough job and had a very thorough look at this matter.

And what the auditor said . . . She had 10 recommendations. We've accepted those recommendations. We either have implemented or are implementing these recommendations. And what the auditor said, these are the auditor's words, and I would quote, Mr. Speaker:

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, and 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.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Pathetic and weak, Mr. Speaker. And you know, same old, tired talking points from the appointed minister. But the arrogance is incredible. And you know, we've been reaching out across the province, hearing and listening to many of their constituents, Mr. Speaker. And if the backbenchers would actually be listening to their constituents, I don't think they'd be feeling quite as arrogant as we see here today, Mr. Speaker. In fact those backbenchers, if they were true to their word, they should be feeling as betrayed as Saskatchewan people are here today by that cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, on election night the Premier said that Saskatchewan people gave them an opportunity to ". . . keep the promises we made in this election campaign." One of their promises was to return the budget to balance — this budget, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, they missed that by just a little bit, a billion dollars or so, Mr. Speaker. They came up short. Now of course they knew this all along. They were hiding the state of the finances from Saskatchewan people, hiding the budget, hiding the facts. So to the Deputy Premier: when will he come clean that they knew all along that their plan was to make Saskatchewan people pay for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting in this debate that the Leader of the Opposition or the Finance critic has never once acknowledged the fact that resource revenues are down over a billion dollars this year, Mr. Speaker, from last year and the year before and the year . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And they always say over there, everybody saw that coming, Mr. Speaker. Everybody saw that coming. If they all saw it coming, they'd be owning yachts and be in Hawaii right now, Mr. Speaker.

The entire industry didn't see the price of oil coming and staying down for as long as it did. The price of potash has come down, Mr. Speaker, considerably. The value of the Canadian dollar, Mr. Speaker, impacts the revenues of this province. We have lost over \$1.2 billion in revenue. Along with that, on a lag effect with respect to the downturn in the economy, Mr. Speaker, primarily in the resource sector, you start to see a lag with respect to revenues on our corporate income tax and personal income tax here, Mr. Speaker.

What the people of this province have asked this Premier and this government to do is not take draconian action with respect to the economy, Mr. Speaker, and get the budget back to balance over the course of a period of time. We're going to be doing that, Mr. Speaker, in three years time.

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

Changes to Taxation

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the financial position of this province would have been well known to that Finance minister. He knows it full well. The Premier said, "We won't take a day for granted." Well they're taking a lot more than days for granted, Mr. Speaker. They're taking Saskatchewan people for granted, and we won't tolerate it, Mr. Speaker.

They promised time and time again that they wouldn't raise taxes. But, Mr. Speaker, they weren't straight, of course, with Saskatchewan people, and now they're raising taxes on families and small businesses by a billion dollars in this budget alone. They scrapped exemptions on everything from children's clothing through to construction projects.

How do they expect to turn the economy around if families have less money in their pockets, if small businesses have less money to grow and to create jobs, and if those who want to build Saskatchewan are hit with the very definition of a job-killing tax, an increase, a new 6 per cent tax on construction projects, Mr. Speaker?

You know their main promise was to keep Saskatchewan strong. So why are they pushing this tax on growth that weakens Saskatchewan's economy, our competitive advantage, that raises new barriers to investment and that threatens and undermines the very kind of job creation that we need here and now in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I

can say . . . And I know the Leader of the Opposition is going to be meeting with the construction association representatives after question period or sometime later this afternoon. And I want to correct the record yet again, Mr. Speaker. This is not a new 6 per cent tax on construction services in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in the Saskatchewan construction industry they have always paid 5 per cent, or the provincial sales tax, on materials that go into either renovations or new home construction, Mr. Speaker. They no longer have to pay the 6 per cent PST [provincial sales tax] on their materials, Mr. Speaker. They are tax exempt now from purchasing those materials, which now puts them on an equal playing, level playing field with respect to contractors from the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

The realtors association, on budget day, put out a news release. Here's what the realtors association, I think an organization knows a little bit about selling new homes in the province, Mr. Speaker. They said the ". . . Association had four goals for the provincial budget, and three of them have been achieved: focusing on growth, not subsidy; using broad-based taxes to share the load widely; and targeting any tax hikes to consumption while offsetting them with cuts in income tax."

The Association of Saskatchewan Realtors, Mr. Speaker ". . . grades the new provincial budget a net positive, saying it shows courage in taking difficult measures to tackle the deficit, and imagination in shifting toward a tax system that favours growth." That's what the realtors said, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, adding the PST on construction products and labour contracts will slow the economy. Period. And the Sask Party said nothing about it in their campaign. And the same is true for the Sask Party's new 6 per cent tax on tourism and Saskatchewan people looking for a night out. Mr. Speaker, to once again quote Restaurants Canada, the minister is ". . . punishing the sector of the food industry that creates the most jobs and economic activity."

Mr. Speaker, on top of the PST hike, there is another broken promise to seniors. The Sask Party said they'd let seniors defer their property taxes. Well that must have slipped the Finance minister's mind.

Punishing job creators and emptying the pockets of Saskatchewan families and seniors is no way to stimulate the economy. Can the Finance minister admit that he broke their promise to seniors and has no real plan to turn the economy around?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, day after day, the Leader of the Opposition and/or the Finance critic get up in this Chamber and they decry the tax changes that we've made in this province. They make no acknowledgement whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, of the provincial income tax reductions we've also offered up in this budget, no mention whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, of the corporate income taxes we're

going to be reducing in this budget over the course of the next couple of years to keep this province competitive, Mr. Speaker.

The Finance critic gets up every single day and decries the tax changes that we've made in this budget, Mr. Speaker, to fill a \$1.2 billion revenue hole. And then as soon as she's done and sits down, the Education critic, the Social Services critic, the Health critic get up and says, we want to see more spending in this budget, Mr. Speaker. We want to see more spending in education, more spending in post-secondary education, more spending in health care. And then the Leader of the Opposition will get up, Mr. Speaker, and he'll say, we don't like deficits in this province, Mr. Speaker, and we abhor debt, so you shouldn't be borrowing money to invest in any of these kinds of things, Mr. Speaker.

You know what the people of Saskatchewan have said to me, Mr. Speaker? In the absence of a plan with the opposition, Mr. Speaker, they want to know what would the Leader of the Opposition do with respect to a \$1.2 billion hole in our revenue base, Mr. Speaker?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about it. We've been talking about their mismanagement, their scandal, and their waste. That's why we're in this situation. Mr. Speaker, they promised a year ago to keep Saskatchewan strong, but the truth is the Sask Party is tying an anchor to our economy. They're hiking taxes by a billion dollars, and they are cutting tens of millions of dollars from their funding to our cities and towns, so the cities and towns will have to raise taxes too. Does the Sask Party think that no one will notice? Do they think the people of Saskatchewan will blame their mayors and reeves for the Sask Party tax hikes?

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot more faith in the people of Saskatchewan. We are hearing from them every day, and they are telling us, they're telling all of us that they are upset about the Sask Party's broken promises, and they feel betrayed and that they simply don't support them anymore.

Mr. Speaker, they're laughing, but to anyone on the other side, to anyone in cabinet, what are the Saskatchewan people telling them about this damaging budget and their broken promises?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there has been difficult decisions that needed to be made in this budget, and there was no surprise that we were going to have to make those difficult decisions, Mr. Speaker. But what has been our support for the municipal sector?

Maybe the member opposite last . . . Yesterday I read into the record about her previous leader and how he announced a whopping big \$10 million in revenue sharing for the municipalities which brought the ceiling up to — oh, I don't know — \$95 million. What is it in this budget, Mr. Speaker? What is our support for municipalities in this budget, Mr. Speaker? \$257 million, Mr. Speaker.

Year over year over year, the municipalities had no clue what those members opposite were going to give them. They had no way of knowing. They didn't know how to budget for it. They had no predictability. They were struggling with infrastructure because those members opposite didn't think infrastructure was a worthwhile investment in this province.

Things have changed. The support for municipalities has been very strong from this government. We have shown it year over year over year. This is the first time, Mr. Speaker, we have asked them to take a reduction in a very strange program that's called grants to lieu that's not really grants-in-lieu, and this is the very first time that any one of them have seen a reduction.

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

Funding for Libraries

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, during the campaign I guess the Sask Party forgot to promise rural people that if their community was not big enough according to Sask Party cabinet, that their library would be closed. They didn't promise, despite what the minister said yesterday, that even the interlibrary loan service would be cancelled. And while they were claiming to "keep Saskatchewan strong," they didn't claim that they'd fire educators and leave Saskatchewan with limited literary resources, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister have a clue? Does he have any clue about the damage that he's doing to these communities, to our province, to our kids, and to our future? In true Sask Party fashion, he is cutting first and measuring later. How can the minister possibly justify these terrible, these mean-spirited, and these unjustifiable cuts?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the people on this side of the House will never apologize for looking for efficiencies, for looking for economies, and looking for ways to do things better than we've done before.

Mr. Speaker, we have one of the best interlibrary loan services in the Dominion of Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, this morning I directed the officials to meet with the regional libraries to determine the best ways of restructuring to make sure that we can maintain and continue the interlibrary loan service. We have a large investment made in that service, and it's something that we will continue.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I guess the minister missed the notification on the library websites today noting that that program would be suspended come next week.

[14:15]

The Sask Party platform also didn't mention a word about what

this government's plan was for education in the province, Mr. Speaker. There was nothing in there about raising education property taxes while at the same time pulling even more money out of our kids' classrooms. Nothing about dumping education tax revenue into the general revenue fund to pay for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste, and nothing about forcing school divisions to make deep cuts in our kids' classrooms and laying off teachers and support staff, Mr. Speaker.

School divisions all across this province are warning that there will be further cuts to our kids' classrooms. Mr. Speaker, why wasn't this minister upfront about his government's plan for Saskatchewan people to pay more in education property tax while ensuring that our kids' classrooms receive less?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the best metric of our success as a province has been in the rapid growth in our province: 1.14 billion people that live in this province, the highest population that we've ever had; people that have come back from other provinces because of our education system, because of our schools, and because of the economic opportunities in our province, as opposed to the members opposite who closed school after school after school in community after community.

Mr. Speaker, I have a list: the people that lived in Neville have no school. The people that live in Admiral have no school, Piapot, Lang, Earl Grey, the school in Kronau, Gray, Wilcox, Francis, Odessa, Glenavon, École Ross, Willow Bunch, Briercrest, Crane Valley school, Limerick, Macdowall, Prince Charles school in Prince Albert, Smeaton school, Sylvania school, Broadway Elementary School in Melfort, Camsell Portage school in Uranium City, Isaac School in La Loche, Griffin school in Griffin, Golden Prairie school, Windthorst, Lintlaw, Endeavour, Pleasantdale. Mr. Speaker, that's the legacy that was left by those people over there, and, Mr. Speaker, we're going to stand in this House every day and remind the people of it.

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

Support for Children With Autism

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, it's one broken promise after another. Families can't count on the Sask Party. In the election campaign, the Sask Party promised there would be more funding for children with autism spectrum disorder in this year's budget, this year's budget. Then of course the budget comes, and the funding is not there. These families were promised. They expected this support, but this support has not come.

Instead we are seeing cuts to inclusive daycares and to classrooms. The Sask Party is actually cutting some of the few supports that these families did have. Mr. Speaker, they promised that in this budget these families could count on some support, and nothing. What is the minister . . . What does he have to say to the families of children who are living with autism? And why did they break their promise to them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, we take this issue very seriously. The individualized funding for children with autism has been deferred one year. But, Mr. Speaker, we have appointed the working group, which would have had to have been appointed anyway. They'll be doing their good work over the next number of months. We expect to hear back from them with some recommendations next fall. Mr. Speaker, the individualized funding for autism will be in the next budget cycle. We'll make the decisions at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that funding for children with autism under this government has increased dramatically since the members opposite were in government, Mr. Speaker, a total of \$9.1 million in 2017-18. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Provision of Hearing Services

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, it was a promise made, and it was a promise broken. It's not fair to these kids and their families.

Same story yesterday. As the minister tried to explain away the cuts he made to the hearing aid program, we heard him say that they needed to, and I quote, "... focus on core services in health . . . like doctors and nurses and hospitals."

Mr. Speaker, he said that these weren't core services. We are talking about audiologists and hearing services and essential support that kids throughout our province need for development. Well, Mr. Speaker, if taking care of our kids, if caring for them is not a core service of government, what is?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the questions yesterday on cochlear implants for children. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, yesterday her line of questioning, she was wrong. Cochlear implants will continue to be covered. Bone-anchored devices will continue to be covered. Mr. Speaker, those programs are not impacted by this. The hearing aid plan is.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know that the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, she doesn't want to hear the answer. She's quick to criticize any heckling from this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, but she never listens to the answers.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is those specific programs will continue in their current form. Mr. Speaker, the hearing aid program will not. It was a difficult decision we needed to make but, Mr. Speaker, Health is about 40 per cent of the entire budget, Mr. Speaker.

If we're going to get our expenses in order, Mr. Speaker, obviously there's going to be some impact in this ministry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Closing of Saskatchewan Transportation Company

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, their decision to sell off STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] is another broken promise to Saskatchewan people. They're selling off STC and they're selling out Saskatchewan people. They didn't consult with anyone.

Mr. Speaker, STC even bought brand new buses, smaller ones to deal with less routes that Saskatchewan residents were saying and they were accusing to the people. But they should go around Saskatchewan. They should talk to the people. They should let them know their stories. I'm sure they're hearing from their constituents — community leaders, seniors, parents with sick kids, the list goes on. But Mr. Speaker, when will the Sask Party do the right thing? When will they listen to the people who own it and reverse their terrible decision?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank the member opposite for that question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the winding down of STC was a very difficult decision, Mr. Speaker, but it was one that had to be made, Mr. Speaker. We looked at the ridership decline, Mr. Speaker, over the years: down 35 per cent, Mr. Speaker, since 2012. Last year alone, Mr. Speaker, we were down 18,000 rides in one year, Mr. Speaker, and that's, Mr. Speaker, why we had to wind down SaskTel.

Route discontinuation was looked at. You know, frequency reduction was looked at, Mr. Speaker, the marketing strategies, even the bus sizes, Mr. Speaker. But at the end of the day 18,000 rides in last year, Mr. Speaker, decline, that is unsustainable. With that subsidy going up, Mr. Speaker, from \$25 all the way to \$94, Mr. Speaker, that's unsustainable, and they know that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Intent of *The Interpretation Amendment Act*

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier told reporters on the campaign trail that the NDP were being desperate and that they had absolutely no plan to sell off our Crowns. Well what a difference a year makes, Mr. Speaker. They're shutting down and selling off STC, scrapping the grain cars, and Bill 40 puts every one of our Crowns on the chopping block.

The Premier told reporters: "If we're re-elected, we'll make one change: that's to the liquor retailing in the province." Talking about the Crown protection Act, the Premier said, "But will it be changed in respect to SaskTel? No. SaskPower? No. SaskEnergy? No. SGI? No." They laughed off concerns they'd sell off our Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 40 lets them sell off 49 per cent of every one of our Crowns without ever asking permission from the owners, the Saskatchewan people. Is the Premier still laughing off the concerns or just laughing that they got away with another

broken promise? I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan certainly aren't laughing at all.

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the amendment to *The Interpretation Act* is to introduce the definition of the word "privatize," Mr. Speaker. When the New Democrats were on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and they passed their legislation, they had every opportunity to define that word, Mr. Speaker, and they didn't do it, Mr. Speaker, which leads one to suspect why they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about partnerships. Every one of the speeches that they speak out . . . in second reading, they talk about partnerships, Mr. Speaker. This legislation's about defining a word. It's about establishing partnerships, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to withdraw the legislation. We're going to move forward with it, Mr. Speaker, and that's the position of the government.

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

Effect of Taxation Change on Price of Beer

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I can't understand how they can be so out of touch with the realities people are facing today. When they said they'd sell off 40 SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] stores, they promised "more competitive pricing." Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Sask Party, this summer Saskatchewan people will be cracking open the most expensive beer in the country. That's right. Under their new tax plan, buying a two-four here in Saskatchewan will cost more than anywhere else in Canada. So this summer when families head out to the cabin or get ready to have friends over for a barbeque, they're going to be paying more.

Mr. Speaker, we were worried the private liquor stores would raise the prices, but the Sask Party beat them to it. Mr. Speaker, why is the Sask Party pushing ahead with their ill-conceived and un-Saskatchewan tax grab on beer?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report, pleased to report to the House that the conversion of the stores is going well, that there have been seven conversions thus far. Others are proceeding apace, Mr. Speaker. We had an SLGA board meeting this morning and significant . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — And significant positive progress is being made. With respect, with respect to a beer tax, Mr. Speaker, let me talk about a government that instituted a massive new beer tax on Saskatchewan beer. That would be the

government of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP that instituted a massive increase on products of Saskatchewan imported regional beer, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this side of the House, we are going to defend Great Western Brewery. We are going to defend our industry in this province, even if they won't.

The Speaker: — Why is the Deputy Premier on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the minister.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery is Eugene Paquin, one of my constituents, a great volunteer, a great citizen of the province. Very active in MS-related [multiple sclerosis] issues as well as hard-of-hearing issues. Somebody that's a tireless volunteer for many good charities including the particular one that I have a specific interest in. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to welcome Mr. Paquin to his Assembly today.

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

Mr. Forbes: — I'd like to join in with the minister to introduce a guest in the House.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member.

Mr. Forbes: — I too would want to welcome Eugene Paquin to his legislature. Eugene has quite a history in education and as well in the health with MS, I believe, and as well within . . . Issues around hearing is a big, big issue for Eugene and he has been a frequent visitor to the legislature, very concerned about the progress of people who are vulnerable in our society. So I would like to ask all members to join the opposition and the government side in welcoming Eugene Paquin to his legislature. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 — *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 61, *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of

Economy that Bill No. 61, *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Act* 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: — First reading of this bill. When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of the Economy.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 62 — *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 62, *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of the Economy that Bill No. 62 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 minister.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — 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 answer to question 285.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled the response to question 285. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the

answer to question no. 286.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered a response to question 286. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answer to question 287.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled the answer to question 287.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 59 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2017*.

Mr. Speaker, this Act deals with the procedures for charging people with provincial offences and offences against municipal bylaws. The Act also prescribes the court's powers and duties respecting provincial offences, which generally follow the summary conviction provisions of the Criminal Code, and the enforcement of fines resulting from convictions.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments that I'm proposing are aimed at ensuring that Saskatchewan's traffic laws are enforced fairly and efficiently. The amendments will create regulatory authority to remove traffic fines from eligibility for registration in the fine option program. Mr. Speaker, the fine option program will no longer be available for offenders paying fines for all offences under *The Traffic Safety Act* and associated regulations, or for parking and speeding offences under bylaws.

The specific offences that are no longer eligible for the program will be prescribed in the regulations, which will provide the flexibility to change the list in future without additional Act changes. Mr. Speaker, the regulations will also provide the flexibility to support the poverty reduction strategy by allowing low-income individuals to continue to access the fine option program in certain prescribed circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, removing traffic offences from eligibility for registration in the fine option program will save approximately \$230,000 a year in administrative costs. The amendments will also result in an estimated 1.53 million annual increase in fine and victim surcharge revenue collected.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will also authorize the regulations to improve the flexibility of the new administrative process for granting extensions of time to pay a fine. The Act was amended in the fall of '16 to create this new administrative process which will move applications for an extension of time to pay a fine out of court and into an administrative process through the fine collection branch which will reduce the number of people attending court.

Mr. Speaker, ongoing consultation with the court and with the municipalities that have identified some tickets issued under bylaws. They will need to be handled differently under this new process. Expanding the regulation-making authority to allow exemptions for affected bylaw tickets and to create alternative requirements for those affected tickets will resolve these issues and will allow the new administer of process to be implemented more efficiently.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, these amendments will authorize regulations to confirm the processes and requirements to be followed when a justice imposes a fine or grants an extension of time to pay a fine and to authorize justices to continue to order immediate payment of fines in certain circumstances.

So that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved that Bill No. 59, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2017* 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. Deputy Speaker. I rise in my place, as I normally do on second reading speeches, to give the official opposition's perspective on any particular bill that the province has coming forward, Mr. Speaker — Bill 59, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2017*.

Mr. Speaker, the bill gives the cabinet the ability to limit the types of offences that can be worked off under the fine option program. Now what that's about, Mr. Speaker, from my own perspective, the fine option program, as people may or may not know, is a program where low-income people that receive a fine through the court system are able to work off their fines through hours of work through community programs such as cleaning up your community or painting up the local rink or volunteering at some programs that help the communities overall, Mr. Speaker. There's a wide variety of service that many of these people that get these fines can certainly do, volunteer work, and pay off their fines rather than paying cash for these services.

Mr. Speaker, we do need to have reasoned, evidence-based, fair assessment of how our justice and corrections system work, Mr. Speaker. Obviously what we want to do in the opposition is make sure that justice is as efficient as possible but not in a sense of compromising the fairness aspect of any court case. Mr. Speaker, I think that goes without saying.

That being said, one of the things that we want to do is we want to be able to talk to a number of organizations and people and stakeholders that certainly have their perspective on a fine option program.

And it was with a bit of interest, Mr. Speaker, that I paid attention to what the minister was saying as it pertains to some traffic offences, whether it's parking tickets or whether it's speeding tickets or whether it's photo radar tickets, Mr. Speaker. I think what's happening with that particular aspect is that there's a lot of revenues being generated for both the provincial government and certainly some of the other levels of government throughout the province.

And it's going to be really curious for us to find out exactly what kind of revenues are being derived from the photo radar tickets, Mr. Speaker. What kind of revenues are being derived from parking tickets, speeding tickets? Because obviously, Mr. Speaker, as you look at some of the evidence that we see, the fine option program provided people of low-income background the ability to work off their fines. Well this certainly takes some of the ability away, and cabinet will decide whether you can or cannot.

And the real question we have is, what kind of revenues has the Saskatchewan Party government received and the people that are being caught either through the photo radar process or through traffic offences and parking tickets? It's going to be a real curious effort to find that out, Mr. Speaker. And is this another example of how they take away their fine option program, Mr. Speaker, and start having some of the parking tickets coming directly to the province in the form of cash as opposed to fine option? Is this yet another cash grab for the province? I would suggest that it is, Mr. Speaker. We need to find out those revenues that they're receiving as of now because the people of Saskatchewan would certainly be curious.

So there's a lot of issues that we have on this particular bill and, as I mentioned before, many of my caucus members are in contact, networking with the various organizations to get better information on this bill and how it affects and impacts our lives, Mr. Speaker.

So on that note I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 59, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 59. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017*. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Act will amend *The Legal Profession Act, 1990* to eliminate the requirement that lawyers employed by the government pay the Law Society insurance premiums. These premiums are currently paid by the government on behalf of those lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment would exempt lawyers employed by and those on exclusive contract with government institutions from the requirement to participate in the mandatory insurance program for lawyers operated by the Law Society. Government lawyers, like all other government employees, receive good faith liability protection as an aspect of their employment, so the Law Society insurance is redundant. Justice lawyers who are affected by this change have been assured that the government will continue to provide this support. The next payment is due June 15, 2017.

The Law Society rules provide an exemption for prosecutors employed by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice and all lawyers employed by the federal Department of Justice in Saskatchewan. This arrangement has been in place for over 20 years. Government lawyers across Canada do not participate in this type of insurance except Nova Scotia, where they pay a nominal amount. The Act will allow for regulations to remove certain government agencies from the definition of "government institution" at the outset, but allow them to decide to participate in the future without a change to the Act if it is considered appropriate at that time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, eliminating payment of the insurance will save over \$200,000 annually across the government. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved that Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017* 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. Deputy Speaker. Once again I paid very close attention to what the minister was speaking as it pertains to the contents of Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017*. Primarily from what we can glean from the Act itself, Mr. Speaker, this bill simply removes the requirement for lawyers employed by the government institutions to maintain professional liability insurance. This bill will also affect Legal Aid Commission lawyers, in-house counsel at the Crown corporations if we still have any at the end of the government's term, in addition to the Ministry of Justice lawyers like drafters and Crown prosecutors.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is really an interesting bill, that there is obviously discussions that have to occur with the legal professional people in our community and certainly throughout our province. So it's very important that we consult with them to see how this bill impacts them and certainly their profession. There's been a change. As you know, as the minister alluded, 20 years ago some of these rules were put into place, and this is obviously a new process that they have presented to this bill.

So we're going to take our time as the opposition to try and understand more about the bill, network with the appropriate professional legal people, and certainly solicit some of their advice so we're able to make sure that those interests and that information is shared as this bill proceeds through the Assembly.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 60, *The Legal Profession Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 58

Bill No. 57

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 57 — *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my honour to rise in the Assembly today following in the footsteps of the member from Athabasca. This Bill No. 57 is a budget bill. It's one that we knew was coming, and basically there's a couple of things that are happening in this bill. It's a very short bill. But other than raising the amount per cigarette of taxes from 25 cents to 27 cents, it's also changing a definition, Mr. Speaker, which I find rather interesting. They're changing the definition from "snuff," and it's now being called "smokeless tobacco products."

An Hon. Member: — Give 'er snoose.

Ms. Sproule: — Give 'er snoose. It was a good old saying I think back in the Devine days, that a former premier used to use. But now he'll have to say, give 'er smokeless tobacco products, Mr. Speaker, because the definition has been changed. In that case also, smokeless tobacco products per gram, now the tax is being increased as well, and for cigars.

So it's a very straightforward bill having to do with the massive deficit and debt that this government is accruing through their mismanagement, scandal, and waste. So this is something that we can talk about in committee, and we will proceed with our questions directly to the minister and the officials in committee. So thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 57, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that Bill No. 57, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2017* be sent to the committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

[14:45]

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 58 — *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This bill that's being presented today is another budget bill and it deals with financial institutions here in Saskatchewan.

Now we know that this government is desperately looking for funds wherever they can find it, but I think this highlights some of the shortcomings of this government and their understanding of how Saskatchewan operates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because what we have is the increase of a tax on financial institutions. And this includes the corporate financial institutions who are . . . You know, if you look on the Internet, Mr. Speaker, you can see that they are doing well and making quite substantial profits, Mr. Speaker. But what this bill will also do will impact the taxes that are paid by the credit union system here in Saskatchewan.

Now we had a previous Finance minister who had the courage to say no to that, Mr. Speaker, even when I think there was considerable pressure on him to place that impact on the credit union system. But he said no, and I remember him saying that in this House a couple of times. Even after I think it was the Harper government decided to nail the credit union system, we had a Finance minister in this government that had the decency to say no, we want to protect our credit union system because, Mr. Speaker, he knows what's going on in small towns.

I was down in my hometown of Lafleche just this past weekend, and there was the Lafleche Credit Union still open and the TD [Toronto Dominion] Bank shuttered, Mr. Speaker. And I think you would see that story over and over again if you go through the many small towns in Saskatchewan where there still are banking institutions. The pressure that this will put on credit unions, because they need that — it's about \$11 million a year, Mr. Speaker — and they need that money to be able to do the lending that is so critical and so important to the small businesses and the farmers in the communities where the credit unions are the last ones standing, doing business with farmers and with small businesses, Mr. Speaker.

And so that kind of hit is not only going to affect credit unions, it's going to really impact on producers; it's going to impact on, you know, the local pharmacy in the town. I'm thinking of the pharmacy in my hometown that my grandpa started. It's now being run by Rhys Frostad and he just built a new building for his pharmacy. And there's a couple of other retail spaces that are there now, brand new building. How are they going to finance those kinds of things if there's no credit union there to do it, Mr. Speaker? They're going to have to travel longer and farther distances. And again there's good jobs, and it's affecting just the number of people living in these towns, which . . . Every person counts, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So attacking the credit unions is really I think an attack on Saskatchewan. If you look at the top businesses in Saskatchewan, many of them are co-operative based companies, and the credit unions are certainly up there. Affinity Credit Union, Conexus Credit Union are two of the largest credit unions in Saskatchewan. They are some of the top businesses of Saskatchewan, of course Federated Co-op being another one. So we look at these very vital pillars in the economic fabric of this province, based on those co-operative principles, and we need to see them sustained and supported, Mr. Speaker, not attacked like we see in this particular budget. So that's something I think that needs to be of great concern to a lot of people living in small towns in particular where the credit union is a vital feature of their town.

I don't know if you have a credit union in your small town, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, you do? I think that's something a lot of backbenchers could also attest to. So the importance of these institutions, I'm hoping people will speak up and make sure that these backbenchers get that message, and also that they pass those messages on, Mr. Speaker, to their cabinet members because the cabinet members need to hear those messages. I know I'm getting messages that backbenchers are getting from over there, with real disgust with what they see going on in this budget. So I'm assuming that those members will make sure that those messages are being forwarded to the front-benchers who are making these devastating decisions on rural communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Back in 1938 or '39, I believe, in my hometown, there was the very first rural credit union in Saskatchewan. And that's in the town of Lafleche. And 25 years after that in the early '60s there was actually a movie made about the Lafleche Credit Union, and it was called *Neighbourly Dollars*, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it talked about some pillars of the community of the time. This was near the end of the Great Depression. People were in dire straits, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were losing their farms. My dad can recall seeing the loads of people going by with all their worldly possessions, leaving the farm because they couldn't make it anymore. And one of the biggest problems was access to capital.

And the people in my community understood the importance of that, and they understood the importance of helping out your neighbour. So what they did is . . . They had read about these credit unions. They'd heard about them in Germany and they heard about them in Quebec. And they thought, well maybe that's something we could try here. So the people in my community got together and they found someone. And one of the farmers, they tell us in the movie, one of the local farmers who had some money said, look, I will give you the capital you need to start your lending program.

And it was through neighbours that people were able to buy that extra quarter section that they needed to complete their farming operation or improve their operation, Mr. Speaker. Without that credit union, so many of those farmers would never have been able to access the capital they need. And that story can be told throughout the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think wherever we have a community-based banking system that is supporting the community.

So this attack on credit unions is unwarranted, Mr. Speaker. I

think it's unwise. I think it's short sighted. But as we say about this government, rather than ready; aim; shoot, we have a government that likes to say ready; shoot; oh, we should have aimed, Mr. Speaker.

Ah, shoot, as my colleague says. This is short sighted. This is going to be devastating in its impact. And I'm afraid the desperation of a government that is plagued with mismanagement, scandal, and waste is being presented once again in this budget bill.

So we'll have a few questions for the minister and the officials on the technical side of this. The actual provisions in the Act are quite complicated with very complex tax formulas that are being presented, so we'll have some questions on the technical side of it when we get to committee.

But in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan will be dismayed and disheartened to see the long-term impact of this bill unless of course this government sees the wisdom, the backbenchers let the cabinet know that this is a bad idea, and then maybe they'll actually decide to pull the bill from the budget bills. But beyond that, we'll have more to say in committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 58, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 58, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the standing committee on Crown corporations and central agencies . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Good.

Bill No. 48

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 48 — *The Education Property Tax Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to enter into debate on Bill No. 48, an Act respecting education property taxes and making consequential amendments to other Acts. And it's one that we will have to take a very close look at, just as I start to go through it. And it's

a complex change to what has been current practice. And whether there will be unintentional consequences, we'll have to see.

There are people out there that say they have questions. We know that when the Saskatchewan . . . And I quote from an article on March 23rd, 2017 from Global News. The title is "Sask budget brings significant changes to school division funding and decision making." This is the quote:

Saskatchewan School Board Association President Shawn Davidson said they're looking forward to working with the ministry but doesn't want to see divisions lose their autonomy. "The reason why local boards are elected is because our ratepayers in our communities want to see an elected trustee make decisions about their kids' futures," Davidson said.

And this is true. So this is going to be interesting how this plays out. Now the minister responsible who introduced this bill said that people were consulted and are supportive. Just from that last quote, I don't know if that's necessarily the case. We've heard this with this government on this side say that they have consulted and people are on board, but it wasn't necessarily the case.

You know, when I look through this, it's . . . [inaudible] . . . complex, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, when you look through the different sections, it really is quite comprehensive in laying out how municipalities collect this education property tax and forward it on to the provincial government and what will happen if they don't do it. And all the ifs, ands, or buts are covered. But I was trying to find one section that said that they are actually going to return that money that's collected to the school boards to administer.

So we have some questions about how does this all actually play out. They are definitely clear about the collecting the money. But how are they going to spend the money, is the big question. And will they be actually spending it or allotting it in a way or somehow including the school trustees in a meaningful way?

Now we had the Minister of Finance who was very clear that he had heard loud and clear, loud and clear that people wanted to keep the local school boards, that they were an important instrument of democracy in our communities. And they wanted to see, as the president of the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] said, an important way of making sure local communities have a way of having some control and input over their education system so their kids can really have the kind of programs that they think are important.

So there are some real changes here, but you know, when I look at the table of contents, responsibilities of the minister . . . and of course that one's really straightforward, section 3. Maybe I'll read it for the people at home. What is the responsibility of the minister?

The minister is responsible for all matters not assigned by law to any other minister, ministry, or agency of the Government of Saskatchewan relating to the establishment, operation, collection, administration or management of

school tax.

So that's it. That's the long and the short of it. The minister gets three lines in this piece of legislation. It doesn't really spell out how the minister will actually administer the school tax, whether they'll keep it at the provincial level. You know, the minister said that it will be flowing back, but we have some real, real questions, and so what that will really look like.

But you know, some of the other parts in the table of contents:

- 4 Tax rates
- 5 Determining property class
- 6 Setting tax rates
- 7 [dealing with the] Separate school division bylaw
- 8 Notice of tax rates
- 9 Levy of school taxes
- 10 Payment of school taxes
- 11 No municipal fees

Now what is that all about? Well that's a pretty straightforward one. Now I don't know, because I was quickly looking in the situation right now, whether there's any fees payable to the municipalities for their work in this. But it's pretty clear now that no municipalities shall charge a fee to the Government of Saskatchewan or a separate board for the services or duties required pursuant to this Act. Now that may be the current practice. I don't know. But I haven't seen it so clearly, so clearly articulated.

And I think this is partly in reaction to this government making sure that they are not going to be paying anybody anything they don't have to. And then somebody will have to pay for the administration and the collection of these fees, because it is a fairly complex situation. It's not an easy thing to do.

And so you have:

- 12 Recovery of taxes
- 13 Municipal payments to the Government of Saskatchewan
- 14 Correction and adjustment of assessments
- 15 Reports from municipalities
- 16 Actions to collect taxes
- 17 Payment to the Government of Saskatchewan of moneys otherwise payable . . .

[15:00]

And so it goes on, but it really doesn't deal with, so how do we ensure that the money goes back to the local school board? It's very clear how the money gets collected, and that nobody will be . . . the Government of Saskatchewan will not be charged any money for these duties as I think owners, as they are. Because they will say any money collected by the 10th of the month needs to be turned in, forwarded to the Government of Saskatchewan, and then once a year there will be an annual report. So it's not an easy thing, I don't think, but these are the kind of questions that we have in committee down the road.

But the bigger question is, will children in schools be seeing the benefit of this? Now this may be argued, well we're just eliminating red tape or something like that. And that's always a

laudable goal if, in the way of doing that, you're actually achieving something bigger, like better schools. Or is this just another tax grab by this government? And we've seen this within the municipalities, that they are . . . Every way that they can get a nickel, they will get that nickel, and if they can get a dime that's even better. And if that means ripping up contracts from many years ago, then that's just what they will do.

So it will be interesting to see how this all plays out, because at the end of the day people will pay if they feel they are getting services for that. But we're seeing from a government, especially in education, where things are actually being actually contracted back. It's getting worse, not better. We're seeing schools where the kids are in overcrowded classrooms. We're seeing programs that will be eliminated or reduced, programs that made our schools pretty special.

We see that . . . And people are very concerned. They're very concerned, particularly around the 3.5 public sector wage cut that's coming, and has been told to every sector where the people are receiving public wages that there will be a cut. Now these cuts have to be negotiated, so we'll see how that all plays out, but this is one that has people rightly worried, rightly worried. Particularly in education. What does that mean in education?

Now we've heard the idea of taking nine days off and not being paid for that. Is that what's going to happen in our schools? And the educational assistants who play such a critical role in our schools, are they going to be asked to take essentially two weeks off, nine days out of the 190 days that they're in a classroom? Are they going to be absent? How's this going to play out? Is this one year or three years? Are teachers going to be asked to take a 3.5 per cent wage cut right off the bat, and how is that going to be negotiated? And what a way to start negotiations off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, saying that we're not even starting at zero; we're starting at minus 3.5. And why, why are we there?

You know, when we look across and we see a cabinet who will not take responsibility for the mess that we find ourselves in, you know, and we often hear them bemoan the fact that with more people there are more services, but there's actually more taxes being collected, more sales tax being collected, more income tax being collected — all of those things that are happening that should balance out. But the fact of the matter is this government has not managed our budgets well, has been in fact creating an unsustainable system so that we find ourselves here.

But teachers and educational assistants and the people in our schools who make our schools work are not the ones who created that situation, but yet they have to pay that price of 3.5. So families are very concerned as what's going to be the impact for the schools and what's going to be the impact for the kids in the schools. Because when we're starting to see that kind of stress on our school communities, it doesn't come without some consequences. And there'll be some that we will be able to predict and some that we won't be able to predict, the unintended consequences.

And so this seems to be kind of a piece of legislation that probably should have been developed in connection with the

stakeholders so that there would be no surprises. This seems to be, you know, what's odd with this government. They've gone from the first couple of terms where they wouldn't consult, but at least there weren't big surprises. Now they seem to be operating on the system of the big surprise, the shock and awe. Who can believe what they'll come up with next?

And this has really got people very, very worried. And so when we see a government that's taken this kind of approach to having an inclusive democracy where they have stakeholders who should be valued, should be consulted, and not afraid, not worried about what's going to be the implication of the kind of legislation that is coming down the tubes because they just don't know, they just don't know what's going to be happening. And so this is really, really worrisome, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so with this kind of legislation there'll be many questions, and I think probably there will be people at the municipal level having a good look over this to say, gee, we get all the responsibility of collecting the money. They really laid it out very, very clear so there will no mistakes. You know, I'm surprised that there's not a 5 per cent commission for the government to accept the money from the municipality that they, you know, this is sort of . . . that they should feel lucky that they're actually working in the service. Maybe it would be 3.5 per cent commission that they would be charged back for the honour of collecting this money for the Government of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do have grave concerns, the direction that education is going. We see a government that is working without a vision of what kind of schools do they want to create, how do we become . . . And you know, in Saskatchewan, we've seen some results that have caused us concern about how well our kids are doing. The PISA [programme for international student assessment] scores that recently, that . . . I know there's a variety of reasons why kids sometimes struggle to make the educational attainments that they should be. But certainly the kind of things this government is doing, in their haste to make sure that in some way they make up for their mismanagement, is happening on the back of our kids. This is a problem.

And so you know, what we also will see in our tax world . . . We are concerned that potentially there could be an education property tax hike. And we see that. And who will be setting that, and what will be the responsibility, and how far the minister and the government hands will reach down the backs of the people who will be having to do that decision?

And yet in the hope of this government, I'm sure that they're hoping people don't make the connection that an education property tax rate increase now is really a Sask Party rate increase. And that's hugely important, that people know that this will be a Sask Party tax hike. And they can dress it up however they may want to do that, but I think that it's really a concern that again, with all the impacts of this budget on working families and families with children that are school-aged, that they're very concerned about what this implication will be. And so we think that we have real concerns about ensuring that the revenues that are collected through the education property tax program, those revenues should go to the school division in a way that's transparent and accountable.

Now it is interesting. The Act talks about how it's going to be very accountable how much money the municipality collects on behalf of the province, but it doesn't talk about the other side of the coin, when it leaves the GRF [General Revenue Fund] that the money collected within school divisions will go back into that school division. What is the plan here? We await cautiously what the full plan is here, and will the money all be going back, you know.

We just have to say, and I've said it once already, that we are deeply concerned that monies will be held back and they will come up with some excuse to hold money back, and that will be used and be redirected to make up for this government's mismanagement, for the scandals that they've seen.

And we could go into that whole litany, and whether it's the bypass or GTH or the lean initiative, we can go down the list of where they had to find extra money to pay for certain things. And so will this be another source of income that they didn't have before but now have their hands on? And we're not really sure what the situation would be. So we think that this is a grave concern, and people at home and across the province should add this to the list. There's been many, many concerns raised in this budget, and of course they will say . . .

And of course this is the one-year anniversary of the election. Today we talked about the list of broken promises that this government had in one short year. It's a very long list, a very long list, and of course whether it's the libraries, whether it's STC that was a year ago safe . . . and the minister will stand up and say, but we saw this coming. Well why didn't you say something about it a year ago?

They withheld the budget, said it couldn't be released because it was too complicated. Well we know exactly why it was too complicated, because they didn't want people to know. A year ago they did not talk about raising the PST, but I would think that they had everything . . . everything was on the table and that certainly were some of the concerns, but they did not talk about any tax increases.

And here we have a province with about a billion dollars worth of tax increases. Didn't mention that at all, that the tax increase will go up and the Finance minister will get up and say, well you know, resource revenue's down. Resource revenue is down, to 1.2 billion. Well we saw that and we've been talking about that for a couple of years now, but for some reason this government has been living in a state of denial, or by the river, by the river denial. He was saying, no, no, no, it will all bounce back; it will bounce back. And finally, finally they had to acknowledge, but after the election, after the election, you know, and this is something where the budget, the deficit kept crawling up, crawling up and you know, the minister just could not get a handle on what the actual deficit was.

So that's why we have some worry about this kind of bill where we see them getting access to more cash. And the irony is they're going to ask for all sorts of accountability and transparency to make sure that they're getting every nickel from the municipalities, but not the same level of accountability and transparency from the provincial government to ensure that every penny of that money collected under the education property tax regime is actually going to education in our

schools, in our communities right throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

So we have a big worry, and I think people across Saskatchewan are beginning to have that level of questioning, that level of mistrust that this government will say one thing but you can almost bet a dollar they mean the other thing. And they will say, well we did tell you so. It's like these grants-in-lieu that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . yes. Yes. You know, when they said everything was on the table, they really meant literally everything was on the table, especially those contracts that were signed 70 years ago that, you know, that unbelievably would be ripped up by this government.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's why we have a concern about the education property tax and this new process that seems to be one-sided, you know, just three lines about the minister doing this and not really laying out exactly what their responsibilities are. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are on this side of the House deeply, deeply committed to making sure our schools are the best they can be, and we know today the schools could use more resources, could use more help, could reduce classroom sizes.

[15:15]

And we could use more and I particularly . . . And I know I've talked to people like Eugene Paquin about the issue around the hearing, the deaf, and hard of hearing. Those kind of resources are just falling away, falling away. And so we are onside to that. But we have a lot of questions about a process that sets up an Act, this government getting their hands on yet another pool of money and there's no system of accountability or transparency in that legislation at all to ensure that every penny collected for education goes to education. That's not in this legislation. I don't see it at all.

So with that I know that there will be many others who will want to get into this discussion, this debate over the days ahead. So I would move that Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act* would be adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 49

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **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*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise again to speak and follow up on Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act*. And of course, that is a smaller Act. And we see these often in legislation, where there is a smaller trailer that comes along.

Sort of reminds me of the STC bus. Right? You see the bus all full. I've seen it many times. What do they have? A little pup trailer behind. So this is sort of like the consequential amendment Act, you know, a little pup trailer behind, that pretty much the same kind of luggage that's in the, or freight that's in the main bus but just a little bit extra. And so they had to create a special bill. And so when we go into committee, we'll have probably similar questions to be dealt at the same time.

But again for people who have just tuned in the last minute or so, we do have a lot of questions. And our goal will be, on this side of the House, to ensure that every penny that's collected under education property tax is going to education. And that people know that if their tax increases now under this, this will be known as the Sask Party tax rate or tax increase. And they better make sure that money goes where people can see it's going. So the transparency, accountability part is going to be huge. They better make sure that there is a system.

And this government, people have a lot of questions about their intent. It's sad to say that that government, that the integrity has been really hammered over some of the surprises they did in the last budget, particularly with municipalities in terms of the grants-in-lieu and all those programs that they thought were in contracts but now are being ripped up. This is not a good way to start. So they can have their convoluted processes and hopefully will disguise some money that can be, you know, siphoned off.

And I think of last year, the last couple of years where we saw upwards of 400 million go from Workers' Comp back out to public, out to the public and to the private employers. Now some of that may have, should have gone, but other of, you know we're having a situation now where some of that money could have really gone to help out with people who were hurt at work.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I won't speak long about this Bill No. 49 because it is relatively straightforward, it's a consequential amendment. The meat of the matter really is in 48 and I've talked a bit about that. So I won't want to repeat myself too many times, but we do have concerns, and we will be sure to raise those in committee. But we want to make sure the people, the stakeholders who are affected by this, do have a chance to raise their issues with us. So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act*. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre 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 Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 53

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 53 — *The Provincial Health Authority Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to enter the debate today on Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, Mr. Speaker. This is the bill that will repeal the regional health authority Act and replace it with a regional health authority Act. What it does in essence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is take us from 12 health regions down to one. Under the new provincial health authority . . . So I'd like to tell you a little bit about what the bill will do and then some of our concerns on this side of the House that we've heard from people across Saskatchewan.

So under the new provincial health authority there will be a maximum of 10 board members. Currently regional health authorities can have up to 12 each. Section 2-4 gives the minister much broader powers to make decisions on the operation of the provincial health authority than before, than the minister had before. Section 3-11 allows the minister to appoint a non-voting member to the board for the same remuneration as a board member, and section 4-5 expands the rules for CEO contracts to any prescribed persons. And clause 8-2(3)(a) allows for critical incidents to be reported to a prescribed person instead of going directly to the provincial health authority, while the old legislation required critical incidents to be reported directly to the regional health authorities. And section 10-2 gives cabinet broad powers to suspend any Act or law in order to cut health regions.

So there'll be an opportunity in committee to discuss some of the finer points of this. And I've got much to say about this bill and I will do that here, but I'm looking forward to the opportunity in committee to ask some more detailed questions about these changes in this bill.

But broadly speaking this bill is taking us from 12 regions to one health region at a time where health care is already hugely strained. We've got front-line care workers, whether they work in long-term care or in our hospitals, who are under huge pressure, lack of staffing, pressure on health regions already. This budget has saw a point seven per cent increase in health region funding. For all intents and purposes, that's a cut when you take into consideration wages, Mr. Speaker, when you take into consideration energy bills, usage, all those kinds of things. Point seven per cent increase — and that is a cut.

And we've seen this time and time again from this government. This government has downloaded their problems onto the health regions and not provided them the funding that they need. I think about Saskatoon and Regina where the usage has grown exponentially and the resources just aren't there.

This government, Mr. Speaker, with this bill is saying, look over here, we're doing something about health care; we're doing something about our lousy record in health care. But on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, they are cutting front-line

positions, Mr. Speaker. So this is a distraction. The reality is what happens with this kind of reorganization . . . So administration changes, Mr. Speaker, are not transformational, I would argue. But what often happens with this kind of health care reorganization is it pulls everybody's energy and time away from the work that they're supposed to be doing. That the work, I might add . . . They're already under huge stress. Health care providers are under huge stress on the front lines, Mr. Speaker.

And despite this bill, when this bill passes, as it will because there are 50 of them, Mr. Speaker, and 11 of us — there is no doubt this bill will pass. And when this bill passes, and even when this new provincial health authority is in place later this year, Mr. Speaker, the changes will take years and years and years. So people's attention, instead of being on providing the services that they should be, are on the reorganization, Mr. Speaker. Some of the issues that have cropped up . . .

Well let's talk about how this all came about, Mr. Speaker. About a year ago, actually a little bit after, prior to the last budget, the minister and the Premier started throwing out conversation around transformational change, and that wasn't something that they talked about before the election. That was something they talked about after the election, Mr. Speaker.

So they're proposing that this health care amalgamation, moving from 12 to one region, is transformational change. So they've floated this balloon and talked about this idea at the last budget, and the minister had committed to putting a commissioner in place over the summer to start investigating and looking into this. The summer passed though, Mr. Speaker, and there was still no work done on this. And then in the final days, I believe at the end of August, the minister did announce a panel, a three-person panel of some very qualified and respected people to look into this.

But the consultation period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was very short — just about a month, maybe slightly over a month, Mr. Speaker. I spoke to lots of people in health care, not just those who work in health care but users of health care, citizens, Mr. Speaker, who had concerns about not having an opportunity to have a voice or they were very dissatisfied with the consultation process.

And then the government comes up with a report. And actually some of the concerns that were also expressed to me is the minister was very prescriptive in the mandate for this committee. It wasn't suggesting to the minister or to this panel that they should look into how many health regions is the optimum number. The mandate of the committee was to cut the number of health regions, Mr. Speaker.

And I don't want to be prescriptive. I'm not sure if that's the right answer. I do know the right answer isn't throwing a system into flux or chaos, which is what this kind of change does at a time when it's already under pressure thanks to this government's record, Mr. Speaker.

Issues around executive and CEO pay, that's something that we've been raising on this side of the House for quite some time. We saw in health regions under this government that executive pay that ballooned, so this government can talk about

wanting to reduce that. But it's under them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's increased. RQHR [Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region], I believe, in a period of about three years, executive pay increased by 46 per cent. In Five Hills, it was by 37 per cent, Mr. Speaker. People were concerned about that.

And last year we had an election and this government had committed that they would take \$7.5 million in the budget — actually this wasn't in the election; it came up in the budget — that they would put that money onto the front lines in long-term care because we have a crisis in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. We have huge understaffing issues where you've got the ratio of patients or residents to health care workers at a rate where health care workers have trouble getting patients to the toilet in a timely fashion or to get them water or to feed them, Mr. Speaker.

So this government last year committed to taking \$7.5 million of executive pay and putting it onto the front lines in health care in long-term care. And I can tell you from speaking to people, that hasn't happened yet. That hasn't happened. So we have a government who talks about cutting administration and saving money. Well they had an opportunity this last year to do that as well, Mr. Speaker.

A big thing that I continue to hear from people over and over again, and I had an opportunity this fall to travel around to multiple communities in rural Saskatchewan and a big theme that I heard loud and clear around this, and this was before the government had announced its decision around one health region, but the thing that I heard loud and clear from people, whether it was in Preeceville or La Ronge or North Battleford, that they were very concerned about local voices and losing their local voice. And in fact, in places like La Ronge, they already felt like their decisions, health care decisions, were being made further away from them than they would have liked. But they fear this move to a provincial health authority and those decision-making voices getting farther away than they already are, Mr. Speaker.

And you think about the suicide crisis of young people, or you've got kids committing suicide, deciding that they don't have enough hope in their life that they chose to take their lives, Mr. Speaker. That requires some serious commitment and dedication and solutions from people in the North, and the financial resources and the supports from this government to make that happen. And people in the North don't believe that that's happening and have not a lot of faith that this is going to make that possible, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting to me. This government likes to latch on to the quick, easy fix. And obviously health care is incredibly complicated. But just a couple of years ago in this House, we were having debate after debate about lean, about spending \$40 million on John Black, an American lean consultant, and \$6,000 a day for sensei and translators or all kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, wrapped around this government's lean work. And lean was going to be . . . The rolling out lean across the province was going to be the health care saviour, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

And we know from experience — you just need to go look in an

emergency room or talk to anybody who's accessing health care — lean has not been the silver bullet. Nor is this going to be, Mr. Speaker. And in fact, I argue that it will put additional pressure on already a strained system. There's lots of concern from health care workers who are telling me they're concerned about what this is going to look like and how this is going to impact the care that they provide. I'm hearing that loud and clear. And we'll have many questions in committee about this.

We have huge challenges in health care, Mr. Speaker, that this government has failed to address. The end of March, March 2017, actually — that was just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker — our Premier, just a few short years ago, had committed to zero waits in emergency rooms by this time. And again, one only needs to visit a . . . He did back away on that promise just a couple of years ago and extended that, but not that long ago he had committed by March, the end of March 2017, that there would be no waits in emergency rooms.

We've seen around surgery wait times, the one place where the government did have some really good progress because they put money into it, those waits have had some serious issues and had started to climb again, Mr. Speaker. Waits for specialists are a huge problem. Access to family doctors continues to be a problem, Mr. Speaker.

There are no shortage of issues. I'm curious around the CEO tours, and it'll be interesting in committee both on this bill, but also in Health estimates. So the one thing out of this government's seniors' care crisis that they had committed to doing a few years ago under the former minister were CEO tours of long-term care facilities. So I'm just wondering how that is going to carry on under this new provincial health authority. It gives us a snapshot of what's going on in long-term care, and it hasn't improved, Mr. Speaker. Our most vulnerable citizens, the frail elderly — I think it's about 7 per cent of the population who end up in long-term care, who need to have better supports, Mr. Speaker . . . And so I'm curious about the CEO tours and how that is going to look like going forward, Mr. Speaker.

Home care and ensuring that . . . So we think about what costs in health care, and home care is a really great way to help keep people out of hospitals. So we look at our overcrowded emergency rooms. We look at our overcrowded hospitals — too many people. They're called alternative level of care patients. They shouldn't be in the hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and that's because we're missing supports out in the community.

We're missing mental health and addiction support, Mr. Speaker. This government had a mental health and addictions action plan two-plus years ago, and there's been very little action on that.

So we look at how all these things are connected, mental health and addictions and emergency room waits. We look at seniors' care, and many seniors who end up waiting in the transition wards in hospitals, which are not homes, for months at a time in long-term care. We don't have proper home care services or it's been whittled back and whittled back, Mr. Speaker. Care for chronic illnesses, often people end up in the ER [emergency room] because of chronic diseases, whether it's diabetes or lung diseases or heart issues, Mr. Speaker. Chronic illnesses are a

huge part of the burden on our ERs and our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. The government hasn't put the money into those preventative, proactive things.

And this moving to one health region again is sort of that, look over here; we're doing something about health care. But really they aren't, Mr. Speaker. We have seen cut after cut. And mark my words, as this budget continues to roll out, there will be many more cuts across health care.

We've been talking the last couple of days about cuts to audiology services or spiritual care. Those are small cuts, Mr. Speaker, but they have huge impacts. They're small cuts in terms of a budget number, though I believe it's 1.5 million for spiritual care. But you know, when I've talked to people in the past, since the budget, about what spiritual care does for them . . . I've talked to people who have used spiritual care who said it made all the difference in the world when it came to their loved one having a good death, Mr. Speaker.

I've spoken to people in health care who have told me those spiritual care workers, those professional sort of multi-denominational professional spiritual care workers — they aren't clergy; they're professional spiritual care workers — are a huge part of the health care team. That's what front-line care workers have told me, Mr. Speaker. So we've seen these kinds of cuts.

Oh, we've seen the increase to long-term care rates, Mr. Speaker, in this budget. So we have a government who's saying, look over here; we're doing something about our lousy record. But they are making cuts, Mr. Speaker, and more will come.

I look forward to the opportunity, once this gets into committee, to ask the minister some very specific questions from all kinds of folks that have spoken to me about their concerns around the move to one health region. And the bottom line is, this is going to put more strain and pressure and stress on an already overstressed system that this government, despite years of record revenue and an opportunity to invest in some really good things, has chosen not to do that. They've chosen to try to find the silver bullet and invest in things that have made problems greater.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to conclude my remarks and let this bill move to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, be committed to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Bill No. 54

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **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*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* is the companion bill to *The Provincial Health Authority Act*, Mr. Speaker, the enabling legislation that will allow this government to basically take local voices out of health care, moving us from 12 regions, Mr. Speaker, to one health region. I'm glad to have an opportunity to just speak a little bit more about this decision by the government to do this.

The one thing I didn't mention on Bill 53, which I think is incredibly important, is the 3.5 per cent cut that this government will be imposing on health, Mr. Speaker. So I talked about the point seven increase in the budget, which for all intents and purposes is a cut, but they're also imposing a 3.5 per cent cut across the board, Mr. Speaker. You can't cut 3.5 per cent out of an already strained system and not cause great harm, Mr. Speaker. This is only going to make matters worse, and this chaos that this move will create for years to come.

So this bill, as I said last time, these two bills will pass and we will be down to one health region, but that the change to that health region over time will take years and years and years, and pull people's attention away from the good work that they should be doing in ensuring that people have access to the services that they need.

As the Health critic I would be the first to admit — I've talked about some of the challenges in health care — I would be the first to admit things need to change. I have story after story of people who come to my office and tell me their concerns about health care. But this administrative change, Mr. Speaker, is not transformational, and will, I believe, have the opposite effect and will hurt people. But we'll have the opportunity in committee to discuss both Bill 53 and Bill 54, the bill that I'm speaking to right now. But with that I will conclude my remarks and look forward to time in committee, and I will let this bill move to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Bill No. 50

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Tell that **Bill No. 50 — *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and join in the debate around Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*. Now this bill mainly, Mr. Speaker, repeals *The Wascana Centre Act*, and I'll be focusing most of my comments on Wascana Park and Wascana Centre, Mr. Speaker.

The park, it's well known. It borders the southern edge of my riding, Regina Douglas Park, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it also encompasses the building that we're sitting and standing in here today. It's a beautiful park. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you go around it you'll see how many different people use it, both in the city and tourists who come to the city, and how many people use it for many different occasions and reasons. I often go for a walk around the lake on Sundays, and in particular you'll see the diversity of our city in full bloom or on full display, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at that time. It really is a beautiful space, a wonderful community gathering point and a well-utilized piece of property.

Now this bill, it will repeal *The Wascana Centre Act*, which was the piece of legislation that created the authority that was tasked with the honour, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of regulating and controlling this beautiful piece of property, and it will replace it with the new Act and transfer control from the Wascana Centre Authority to the Provincial Capital Commission.

We've already been hearing concerns from many stakeholders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to this change. I'm sure that members opposite have also been receiving those concerns, in particular members from the Regina region, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This bill will create a very, very significant change in terms of who has the power to control, or who has control over decisions with respect to Wascana Park and Wascana Centre, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In particular, and I first of all will talk a little bit about how it was under *The Wascana Centre Act*. Under that legislation, cabinet selected 5 out of 11 of the commissioners. So it was created in a way so that no matter who was in provincial government, no matter who was sitting in this House at any particular time, they would never have the ability to control the Wascana Centre Authority while there was the ability to have five members on there who had a voice, who had a say. The control of this very, very important piece of land was never politicized, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was never in the hand of any particular provincial government body. And it's been working very well for the Wascana Centre for a very long period of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now under this new legislation, cabinet will select all of the commissioners for the body that will be controlling Wascana Centre, with two out of five ... so there'll be five commissioners total, and two out of five of those commissioners will be selected by cabinet from lists nominated by the city and by the University of Regina, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So there'll be only one individual there to express the desires, wishes, and concerns and interests of the city of Regina, and there will only be one individual on the commission who will be expressing the desires, wishes, and concerns of the University of Regina, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And then there will be three individuals in addition to that chosen by cabinet.

So not only will whoever is representing the city and whoever is representing the University of Regina will be ultimately chosen by cabinet, but those other three individuals will also be chosen by cabinet, which provides the Sask Party and the provincial government of future generations to come with something that had never existed before within the Wascana Centre Authority, and didn't exist before for good reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because as I said, it took the politicization of this very, very important piece of land away from any type of ... any government, past or future, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that changes it. That completely changes this legislation.

So naturally stakeholders are quite concerned about that, and they should be. We've seen, as we say time and time again, we've seen years of this government, of the Sask Party messing up things that they have control over. We've seen years of scandal, mismanagement, and waste, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so obviously there's going to be quite a concern if they couldn't handle the provincial budget. If they couldn't handle this province before, I don't know why we would trust them with handling this important piece of property when it's been served so well by the commissioners in the past, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[15:45]

We've seen time and time again the Sask Party conducting a power grab when they don't like what they see or when they want to take over something that, for whatever reason, they're not happy with. We've seen that with NORTEP [northern teacher education program], Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're seeing that with school boards now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in education legislation that's coming down from this budget this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we've seen that with health regions as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We're seeing — and I laugh a little bit when I say this — but

we're seeing a centralization of power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to provincial government. And we're even seeing it with this important, important body of land in this city, Mr. Deputy Speaker, land that I don't want to see lost for future generations. I want to be able to experience it with my children and my grandchildren in the condition that it is now. I don't want to see it ... I see it as it is, see what could happen with it in the future when more government creep happens.

We're actually already seeing a bit of a privatization creep on this land, and I worry about what more will come with the provincial government desperate for cash, comes and takes over control over this land, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As we said before, or as I've said already, we've seen a decade of mismanagement by this government in many areas of the province, in many different departments, and I worry about what level of mismanagement we'll see when they take over control of the Wascana Centre Authority.

As I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're already hearing concerns from stakeholders, and I'm sure that we'll be hearing more once more people understand what's happening with this legislation, and once more people have the ability or are able to wrap their minds around what's going on.

And I want to quote actually from one of Regina city councillors who has already spoken out against this change, and it's ward 2 city councillor and actually I believe past Sask Party candidate, Bob Hawkins, who I believe, thanks to my friend ... [inaudible] ... ran in 2011 for the Saskatchewan Party. And he said, "This was done without consultation and suddenly in the provincial budget document. I know no approach to consultations with the city whatsoever," Mr. Deputy Speaker. And if they didn't consult with the city on this major change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not too sure who they did consult with or if they did any consultation whatsoever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand from my conversations with city councillors that this came as a huge shock to many city councillors and they're all very, very concerned about what this is going to mean for the future of our park.

And he also said ... And I don't know if I mentioned this before. It's a Global News article dated March 31st titled, "Regina city councillor worried about future of Wascana Park." He also said, "We need some transparency here. Transparency which is especially important because something as special as Wascana Park is an issue," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that's the concern here and that's a concern we're seeing in a lot of aspects of this budget, the lack of transparency by this government with respect to this legislation in particular. It feels like it's something that we're going to ... that the hammer might not drop now, but it's sure probably going to drop in the months to come, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's the worry, is we don't know what sort of major impact this will have.

But by the time the legislation passes, the city of Regina, the University of Regina, the people of Saskatchewan won't be able to have a say. The people of Regina won't be able to have a say. This will be controlled by the Sask Party and provincial governments to come. And that's not how this was designed, and it was working successfully generations prior. There's no

reason for the change to happen now unless it is nothing but to serve as a grab, some sort of money grab by the Sask Party in future times to come.

As I've said already, we worry about if there's going to be a privatization creep in the Wascana Park, worried about what this is going to mean for roads and maintenance, worried about what this going to mean for the Wascana master plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is included in the legislation. But from my reading of the legislation, it looks like there is going to be an allowance for changes to be made to the Wascana master plan, and that will be outlined in the regulations. And as always, we don't have a copy of the regulations so we don't know how stringent the requirements are going to be for those changes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the Wascana master plan, as it currently sits, does have some requirements for any new buildings or any new structure or creation in the park. But the worry is what sort of changes are going to happen in the months to come?

With that, I know there'll be other members on our side who will want to join in on this debate, who will also want to express the concerns that they've heard from stakeholders with respect to this terrifying change in this new legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So with that, I will adjourn debate on Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Douglas Park has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 51

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Marit that **Bill No. 51 — *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with some gravity that I rise to speak to this bill because again we see more privatization on the part of this government when we see a government as desperate as this one to nail down some money that they can use for fixing the problems that they have. It's always sad when we see again the loss of a well-established and actually financially successful Crown corporation that has served producers in Saskatchewan very well in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, it's a simple bill. I don't think there's a lot to the bill itself. It's basically three pages, two and a half pages long. But it just destroys the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. It wipes it out, Mr. Speaker. Everything that is owned by the corporation . . . It's still about 900 railcars. I think they started with around 1,000 back when it was established. It's now down

to 900. All of that property is being transferred and assigned to and vested in the Government of Saskatchewan.

So they're taking all those assets that are there. I know the book value is around 6 million, I think, at this point in time. But I think those cars are worth more than that to the people that are using them right now. And then basically what this does is it gives this government carte blanche now to do what they see fit with the railcars themselves. So that's one side of the equation and I'll talk about that more later.

But I think one of the important pieces of this bill is the fact that the money coming from the profits is actually turned over to our shortline railway system. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, the main lines in Saskatchewan used to own all the shortlines for many decades. But in the '70s and '80s they decided to start abandoning these shortline rails and many, many, many thousands of miles of track has been pulled out all across the province. But for entrepreneurial farmers who were able to get some capital together and make a bid for some of these shortlines, they were able to purchase them. And we know now that some of them are incredibly, incredibly successful and are doing very, very, well. But they also provide a really big service to the people of Saskatchewan, and you may wonder how that might be.

Well what these shortlines do is they protect our road systems. We know what kind of beating railroads take when you have those big super-B trucks hauling grain down the rural roads. And this is an important cost for all our RMs [rural municipality] and for our highways system. So for the Minister of Highways to cause a burden like this for shortlines is actually short sighted, Mr. Speaker, because it means he's causing a burden for all the taxpayers as well. So that's one of the problems with this bill, and that's just one.

The other thing that we have . . . I have a proud press release from the government that came out in 2013 and the headline is "Government increases shortline railway grants." So they increased the spending. It was \$900,000 that used to be \$700,000. And this is what the government has said about the funding. Here's the quote from the press release:

"We are happy to once again increase the amount of funding available for shortline railways," Highways . . . minister . . . said. "These railways [here's what he said, they] support rural economic development by providing grain producers, oil producers and other shippers with an effective transportation option that also lightens the load on our . . . [railways]."

The other important factor, Mr. Speaker, and indeed the president of the Shortline Railway Association has pointed this out since the budget, is that that \$900,000 was matched by the shortline railways. So we're talking about almost \$2 million now that's being impacted by the decision to throw away the profits of a very viable and successful Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker. So the funding was a 50-50 cost share, and it was matched by the privately owned shortline railways as long as they were eligible.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. There's one particular railway, Big Sky Rail, which I believe was owned at that time

by a company called Mobil Capital Holdings. But a few months after this announcement was made, we see one of our local companies here, AGT Food . . . I think you're familiar with them. They're a company that's built out on Tower Road a new facility there, and they've actually purchased some land that was along Tower Road. They've also purchased a shortline railway, and that was one of the railways they bought a few months after this announcement, Big Sky Rail, amongst some other shortline rails in other parts of the country.

So it's interesting. Now we know that they're going to get rid of that grant. They're going to take a huge hit on especially some of the smaller shortline railways that need this maintenance money to keep those railways safe, Mr. Speaker. So it's a safety issue as well. And we're told by the Shortline Railway Association that if this money is gone, it's going to affect the viability of some of those smaller railways which are servicing and providing a very important service to the producers in the area but, as I said, also to the people who use the roads and the highways, Mr. Speaker.

So it kind of reminds me of cutting STC, and it's almost like cutting off your nose to spite your face. And in this case it's making money, so we don't even have the case that they used for STC, Mr. Speaker. But they're saying, well you know, it's an old program and doesn't need it anymore, and we've got to move on, you know. And that's very different than what the government was saying in 2013, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So one of the questions . . . I know the minister made great news about the fact that a lot of those cars are quite old. They only have 14 years left in their life. Well why stop now? We still have 14 years. So what is pushing the government at this point in time to throw that money away? And I think we're going to have to ask a lot of those questions in committee, Mr. Speaker.

I think what's also interesting is we don't hear the Minister of Agriculture weighing in on this. Surely he's hearing from producers and from local RMs about the impact that this is going to have on the shortline railways and therefore on the producers that use those railways. So there's questions there as well.

The other question is, which one of these shortline railways are going to be able to afford to purchase these cars? They have questions about how the bidding process is going to be done, and we'll be watching very, very carefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about who actually ends up with these cars. Is it going to be fair process? Is it going to be one that allocates fairly to all of those shortline railways? Or are the more wealthy ones, the ones with access to capital, the ones that are going to be able to buy these cars with 14 years of life left in them? Are they going to be able to buy them to the detriment of the smaller shortline railways that don't have access to capital like some of the larger ones do?

Or you know, AGT Food is the highest trading company on the Saskatchewan stock exchange right now. They are very wealthy, and they will have access to the capital that they need. So what happens if they can buy all 900 of them? Is that what's going to happen?

And then of course there's the lease to CN [Canadian National Railway Company] . . . or I forget if it's CN or CP [Canadian Pacific Railway]. Half of those cars are currently leased right now for a lot of money, a lot of revenue for Saskatchewan. And so that lease will end, and then we have to see what happens to those 500 cars. I just want to make sure I've got that right, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

Perry Pellerin, who I'm just quoting now from a *Western Producer* article that came out after the budget:

Perry Pellerin, [who's the] president of the Western Canadian Short Line Railway Association, said the 13 short lines could use the cars but he doesn't know if they could afford them. As well, the cars have only 14 years of life left . . .

The province announced in its budget . . . that 900 provincial cars would be sold and short-line rail[way] companies are first in line.

However, Pellerin expressed worry about other costs. He said the revenue from the cars, which the province leased to railways, paid for a sustainability grant . . . [which is what I talked about earlier].

And he said ". . . that's all gone now." Oh yes, here we are, lease revenues, \$2.7 million a year. More than half of the cars are leased to CP, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and 46 per cent were leased to Last Mountain Railway as of July 31st, 2016.

So, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to note that this corporation has served producers well, has served the people of Saskatchewan very well, was a profitable corporation. It was one that serves a very important need. And if the Government of Saskatchewan is taking all these profitable cars back into the inventory for the people of Saskatchewan, I don't see why it couldn't be arranged that shortlines could still have fair allocation of these cars and that the profits from the cars could still be turned over.

So whether or not there's an actual corporation, the people that run that corporation are valued employees. We know that they work very hard and that they could certainly do that work as public servants as well. It's not too late for the government to decide to actually keep this operation going, maybe not as a Crown corporation but maybe as government business, as core to the services that this government provides to rural folks, Mr. Speaker. And when they talk a lot about core services and what's important, I think this very clearly is one.

And we'll certainly want to talk to the minister about how the assessment was done in terms of transformational change, and how this is not part of the core function of government. So we'll be looking again at what kind of rubric did they use. Was there a check list? Is there a toolkit? How do those decisions get made, or are they simply ideological chain pulling, Mr. Speaker, that you know, if they don't like it, they pull the chain and away it goes?

So I don't see any rhyme or reason to some of the decisions that

are being made in this budget, other than we see a government that's desperate and that runs through everything that we see. That's the thread. They're desperate because of the mismanagement and the waste and the scandal that they have perpetuated upon the people of Saskatchewan for the last 10 years. And now, when it comes time to pay the piper, they are actually destroying some very valuable Crown corporations.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's something that the people of Saskatchewan are going to want to weigh in on. It's still a fairly new announcement, although I think many of the main players were notified in advance that this was a possible outcome of this particular budget. So we'll be watching very, very carefully to see what decisions are made and how they're being made, and whether they're being done fairly or not especially for the shortline railways, Mr. Speaker, who need to be treated fairly in this process.

So at this point I think we'll have a lot of questions for the minister in committee, so I would conclude my comments on Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Highways that Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act* be committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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

Bill No. 52

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 52 — *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say I'm pleased to wade into the debate on Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act*, Mr. Speaker. But as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Saskatoon who knows the value of the Meewasin Valley Authority, it's with a bit of sadness that this debate is happening here today. The

Meewasin Valley . . . I'll tell you a little bit about what this bill is about and then my impression of what this bill means to the people of Saskatchewan, and Saskatoon in particular but the broader province as well, and some of my own experiences with it.

So this bill in particular removes the provincial government's statutory or legal requirement to fund the Meewasin Valley Authority with \$740,169 and the U of S's obligation to provide \$574,000, while maintaining the city of Saskatoon's requirement to provide \$556,700. So it's removing the statutory requirements of the province, and the university will not have to fund the Meewasin any more. And it's just on the city of Saskatoon to do that.

It also removes the requirement that the province, the city, and the university contribute at least \$500,000. And then there's a few housekeeping amendments to modernize language like replacing "his" with "his or her" and correct cross-references to other Acts.

Mr. Speaker, the Meewasin Valley Authority came out of the Moriyama plan. The plan was in 1978. It was a 100-year plan for the Meewasin Valley project, and the piece of legislation came before us in 1979, so almost 40 years, Mr. Speaker.

We see in this budget actually the government hammering organizations and institutions that have been around for many years — the Grain Car Corporation, STC, things that benefit the people of Saskatchewan.

The vision for Meewasin, I'll tell you a little bit about it from their web page, Mr. Speaker:

[The Meewasin Valley Authority Act was] created in 1979 . . . is a conservation agency dedicated to conserving the cultural and natural resources of the South Saskatchewan River Valley. It is the means by which the three participating parties (City of Saskatoon, Government of Saskatchewan, and University of Saskatchewan) have chosen to best manage the Meewasin Valley in the South Saskatchewan River Basin. The creation of the Meewasin is based on the concept that the partners working together through a single agency — Meewasin — can accomplish more than they could individually.

I think it's that partnership that has seen our riverbank thrive, see development balanced with conservation, create a real gem in the city of Saskatoon. We can see the University of Saskatchewan and development that's happened when there's new buildings built. There's certain requirements that are in place, Mr. Speaker, that maintains the character of our beautiful university campus, the conservation of prairie, all kinds of things, Mr. Speaker.

The mission statement of the Meewasin Valley Authority:

. . . exists to ensure a healthy and vibrant river valley, with a balance between [that] human use and conservation by:
Providing leadership in the management of its resources;
Promoting understanding, conservation and beneficial use of the Valley; and
Undertaking programs and projects in the river valley

development and conservation . . .

When I think about investment in the Meewasin Valley Authority, some of the things that jump to mind are tourism. The river valley really is the selling feature of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. And as a Saskatoon resident, Mr. Speaker, that's . . . Not that Wascana isn't beautiful, but I would argue it's the river valley in Saskatoon that really makes that city a wonderful place. Having a river flow through it that has had really great stewardship by the three partners has served citizens in Saskatoon very well.

I think about tourism. So when we attract conferences to Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, one of the things people like, they like to know that you've got great restaurants, good services to ensure that you can hold your conference at the right facilities. But having a beautiful city in a river valley that is maintained in the way that it is, is a huge draw for tourism, Mr. Speaker, when we're bringing in people from out of province or around the world.

But I also think about that need to attract to our university and to our province the big brains of the world, Mr. Speaker. When people are looking at relocating, there's all kinds of evidence . . . Well part of it is around cultural corridors, but the things that people are looking for when they come to a city, or the things that attract them, that Meewasin and the river valley is a huge part of that. The historic, the cultural components, the ability to . . . Running along the river, biking along the river, those kinds of things attract people to our city who contribute to our economy, Mr. Speaker.

I also need to point out that we just had . . . So we had an election a year ago, Mr. Speaker, and there was not a word about this leading up to the election. Nobody talked about . . . None of the Sask Party candidates, the Premier, nobody talked about, none of the Saskatoon Sask Party MLAs who were running talked about pulling money from Meewasin. It emerged a few months later when last year's budget in June came out where everything was on the table.

But you know what we had even more recently, Mr. Speaker? We had a by-election in the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin, Mr. Speaker. And I know I knocked on doors in Saskatoon Meewasin, which like many of our constituencies has a piece of the riverbank. I actually live . . . The Meewasin Valley Trail is about 500 metres from my house. I can walk through Holiday Park to behind the sanatorium where the trail winds up behind it, Mr. Speaker.

Many of our constituencies have a piece of that wonderful riverbank in them, and I know Saskatoon Meewasin is one of those constituencies. And I know when I was knocking on doors, I didn't hear a single person mention that this money was going to . . . that nobody said we are doing the wrong thing with Meewasin. None of the Sask Party members talked about this in their campaign, and that was just a few short . . . well weeks ago, actually. Was it about five weeks now, Mr. Speaker?

People in Saskatoon love the river valley. You take a walk on a summer night and it, that trail, from my neck of the woods up in Holiday Park to Silverwood, the other side of the bridge, Mr. Speaker, out to Whitecap, and past the university, there are

people riding their bikes, skateboarding, walking, people taking photos, people just enjoying nature. It's really a beautiful opportunity.

You can either be in sort of the hub of the downtown centre and have . . . You can have the beautiful spray park along the riverbank or you can be in a much more natural setting, have the opportunity to canoe on the South Saskatchewan, and you sure can appreciate the beauty of the Meewasin Valley.

And cutting this money to the Meewasin Valley Authority, or the statutory requirement . . . So we have two pieces here. This is a government who in this budget cut almost half of the money from the province. It was a \$409,000 cut, which is almost half of the money that they were expecting, their statutory funding. And then they're removing the statutory funding so the Meewasin will now rely on grants. So it will be up to the whim of this government to decide that perhaps next budget the Meewasin will get zero, at a time when this government is already downloading more and more pressure onto the cities, whether it's by cutting library funding or the grants-in-lieu, Mr. Speaker, which are a huge piece.

Just reading a news article from just not more than a few days ago: "For the city of Saskatoon to take over the MVA, funding would cost \$1.58 million a year, or a property tax increase of nearly 1 per cent," the report says. It suggests that the MVA [Meewasin Valley Authority] . . . So that's an increase. I would argue that the Meewasin Valley Authority, much like Wascana here in Regina, is a benefit to all people in Saskatchewan. Obviously those of us who live 500 metres away from the Meewasin benefit every day, but I think people from across this province benefit from having these jewels well maintained and high-functioning partnerships. When you pull the money, Mr. Speaker, it creates a huge problem.

I just want to mention a few things about the Meewasin. The Meewasin Trail ranked as the top feature of Saskatonians that they like about walking in Saskatoon. So the Meewasin Valley trail is their favourite part of walking in Saskatoon. We've got the Beaver Creek Conservation Area. Anybody who has a child in Saskatoon likely has had their child attend the interpretive centre out there or the opportunity to go cross-country skiing there in the winter. There's some cabins that you can stay in. Beaver Creek is just a few kilometres outside of the city, Mr. Speaker.

The interpretive centre there opened in 1984, and it's a microcosm of the Meewasin Valley. It's located where a prairie creek meets a prairie river, and it contains one of the few uncultivated short grass prairie sites in Saskatchewan. The beavers that live there play an important role in keeping the creek habitat teeming with wildlife. Beavers build dams that flood waters upstream, creating beaver ponds, and many plants and animals make their homes in these sheltered ponds.

[16:15]

So kids get an opportunity . . . Well adults as well, but it's really a wonderful educational tool. I know many people who take their kids out there, who've had the opportunity to spend a weekend out there cross-country skiing.

We've got the skating rink in downtown Saskatoon, which is part of Meewasin, and it's probably one of the most visited sites. Thousands of people come to that skating rink every winter, Mr. Speaker, right with the historic Bessborough right next to them. It's really quite a beautiful thing to do in the winter.

We've got the Meewasin northeast swale, and these are just some parts and pieces of it. It's one of the largest pieces of unbroken prairie, riparian, forest, wetland in the Saskatoon region and contains patches of rare fescue. And one of the parts, just reading a little bit about the swale, the Meewasin is monitoring the swale over the long term. So they did a bioblitz to see sort of the biodiversity in 2011 to get a baseline, and helped identify critical areas that were important for biodiversity. And they're using that as a monitoring tool, sort of for the broader perspective, Mr. Speaker. So that's the northeast swale.

We've got Cranberry Flats. Again if you've got kids and you don't have a lot of money, the reality is I see this cut to the Meewasin really hurting people in Saskatoon Riversdale. I live in one of the more socio-economically diverse constituencies probably in the province. I have some much more affluent people who live in Montgomery, but the reality is there's some very poor people who live in my constituency as well.

You know, not everybody can afford a trip to a regional park. Not everybody can afford to drive up to Waskesiu or head down to Cypress Hills. And sometimes the river valley and the activities of the river valley and the parks, whether it's Gabriel Dumont Park or whatever, might be the social outings and the summer holidays for some of my constituents, and I think people across Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. And it benefits everybody.

But I see this government's decision to remove the statutory funding and impose a cut on the Meewasin Valley and put it in jeopardy, and put this wonderful partnership in jeopardy down the road, will impact people who live in Saskatoon Riversdale and elsewhere, people who don't have money to go on those holidays elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that I used to love before I had kids was canoeing. And I would like to tell you that I kept up canoeing after my oldest was born, but she didn't like to leave home very often. She was a bit of a homebody, which is ironic now as she has a bit of a travel bug and is living thousands of kilometres away from me.

But when she was little . . . Before she was born I was an avid canoeist, and one of the things that the Meewasin had put together, a really wonderful eco-canoe guide, like all along the South Saskatchewan you could take a self-guided canoe . . . There was a map from Gardiner dam to the Forks where the North and South Saskatchewan rivers meet, Mr. Speaker, and the Meewasin Valley Authority had helped put that together. And there's nothing quite like canoeing into Saskatoon, putting in at Poplar Bluffs, which you can't anymore.

Poplar Bluffs was a part of Meewasin, but because of the river valley and the flow of the river, it's a very steep drop-off. So the Poplar Bluffs canoe launch is closed now, but it was really

nice to be able to canoe into the city at night. You're kind of like a . . . It just is one of the most lovely experiences you could have with the lights on the bridges, and nobody can really see you in the water, and you can hear all the activity going on.

But the canoeing piece, Meewasin helped develop this eco-canoe guide. But I think, I didn't realize that the Meewasin offered interpretive canoe tours, and they:

. . . provide an opportunity for participants to learn about the South Saskatchewan River from the river on Meewasin's ten-passenger voyageur clipper canoes. Tours depart from Beaver Creek Conservation Area, paddling out onto the South Saskatchewan for two to three hours, allowing paddlers to experience those of the early voyageurs.

So in light of the fact that I haven't canoed much, that actually . . . I hadn't known that they did that. And I thought that was pretty wonderful. But you know what? It says here that:

Canoe Tours run from May into the Fall and pre-registration is required. [But their] Meewasin canoe tours are now done for the 2016 season. Contact Meewasin in the spring of 2017 to find out if and when the canoe tours will resume.

So I think they saw the writing on the wall after the last budget and the former minister's comments around Meewasin. But it's so sad. This really wonderful . . . We'll wait and see, Mr. Speaker, if they're able to maintain these canoe tours, but I'm not so sure that that'll end up being a priority of the Meewasin now with reduced money. We'll wait and see, but . . .

No doubt the Meewasin Valley and the authority, the three partners that manage the Meewasin so very well for the citizens of Saskatoon and the people of Saskatchewan, will be hurt by this government's decision. And as a resident of Saskatoon and a person who represents the constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale, it's incredibly sad. And I think members opposite are undoubtedly hearing from folks who aren't happy about this as well.

But with that, Mr. Speaker, it's a shame that this government doesn't see the benefit of the Meewasin Valley Authority, an organization that was visionary, that has been around for almost 40 years, that is a unique partnership. And I think the minister actually said that in his notes, that he pointed out that the MVA funding model is relatively unique. Well I don't know what's wrong with being unique, Mr. Speaker, and supporting something really good. But with that, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Riversdale 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 Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 55

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 55 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Always good to be recognized by yourself in this Assembly and to take my place and to speak my piece on this case, Bill No. 55, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*.

It's an interesting state of affairs, Mr. Speaker, when legislation such as this comes forward where in terms of the royalty regime that we have in this province has been apparently lacking and not up to the job, Mr. Speaker, and wherein this legislation comes forward with the aim of should an audit of mineral and/or oil and gas producers be found that royalties have not been paid when necessary, a penalty and a subsequent interest is now applied.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting thing that it's a state of affairs where such legislation is needed to be brought forward. And I guess I'm looking for, and maybe we'll get this in committee, Mr. Speaker, but I'm looking for a better accounting of what has been lost in terms of the inadequacies of the royalty regime that this legislation sets out to remedy; what has been the dollar figure of the impact of that inadequacy to the people of Saskatchewan; in terms of the abundant resources of this province, what have the people of Saskatchewan been shortchanged; and what is the dollar figure that can be attached to the negligence on the part of this government when it came to making sure that royalty and taxation amounts were being properly paid.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there's an incremental estimate of general revenue of around \$4.5 million annually that this, if I'm understanding the minister's second reading speech of April 3, 2017 correctly, that that will return to the general revenues, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, we do want to find out, you know, how long has this been going on. When did this first come to the attention of the members opposite? And in terms of what is the dollar figure, in terms of damage that's been done to the owners of the natural resources of this province — the people of this province, the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — if this will in fact be up to the job of making sure that we've got a royalty and taxation regime worthy of its name, or whether or not, you know, what other sort of losses are anticipated, and whether or not this will do the job?

But again, Mr. Speaker, in terms of having a competitive royalty and taxation regime as regards natural resources or, you know, any other economic activity, certainly you want to have a system that is efficient, that is fair, that is competitive, that is effective, Mr. Speaker. And as regards the natural resources and non-renewable resources and the attendant revenues, Mr. Speaker, in particular, it's not just a job that this government's

been tasked with by the people of Saskatchewan, but of course as a non-renewable resource these are revenues that we're holding in trust for the next generation, and the generation after that. So it's important we get that right. It's important that we see these things clearly.

So certainly, Mr. Speaker, we'll be looking for more information from the minister when it comes to a better explanation of the regime that . . . or the shortcomings of the royalty and taxation regime that this particular piece of legislation sets out to correct. Mr. Speaker. I know that some of these questions are better addressed in committee where you can have that more complex, more fulsome exchange, Mr. Speaker. So in that regard, I am ready to end this stage of the bill's consideration and request that the members opposite move on this for committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Energy and Resources that Bill No. 55, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 55, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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

Bill No. 56

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 56 — *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise today to enter into the debate on Bill No. 56. We had second reading yesterday from the minister responsible for this bill, and he gave a few brief comments about the intentions here.

I think on the surface — no pun intended — this is a very straightforward bill inasmuch as levies that were formerly only applicable to wells under this Act are now being extended, the levies are being extended to pipelines as well, and so the language in the bill had to change.

You know, it's interesting though to see how this bill or this Act, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*, is not a new Act, and it's been around in Saskatchewan for a long time. I know it was under *The Revised Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1978*, so it's at

least that old. And I'm not sure when it actually was brought into being. It's an old piece of legislation that has seen many, many revisions over the years as we see the oil and gas patch in Saskatchewan going through changes as well.

One thing that always is surprising to me is the name itself, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*. And I sometimes wonder if that isn't a bit of an anachronism that perhaps . . . I'm surprised the name hasn't changed over the years because if you look at the index for the Act, there's all kinds of things going on here. But mainly it's about, if you look at some of the headings, there's the creation of the board, the Oil and Gas Conservation Board, but also how to get licences for having a well site, how to get . . .

There used to be an oil and gas revolving fund, but that's gone. The Oil and Gas Orphan Fund is managed under this Act; oil and gas production and limitation and allocations of production are handled under this Act. Pooling, drainage units, unit operations, and then of course all of the offences and penalties that would be applicable if individuals who have licences for wells are not following the law.

[16:30]

So I'm not sure . . . I used to know why the word "conservation" was in that Act, but I forget, and I'm just thinking it doesn't seem to work. And I'm not sure why, when we're bringing bills forward for change, why they're not changing the name. But that's just an aside, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What I do want to talk about just briefly today before we take a closer look at the implications of this bill in committee, just a couple of the comments that the minister made yesterday. He indicated that, first of all, the changes to create an "admin levy" instead of a "well levy" are being assessed against well licences and pipeline licensees. Consultation with the industry on the supporting regulations which implement the changes to the "admin levy" will occur over the next few months for implementation this year.

So one of the things we don't know about this, Mr. Speaker, is what this will mean in terms of collection of these levies, or basically a tax on these wells. Is it going to go up? Is it going to go down? What sort of budgetary line items will this affect, and how much more money will the government bring in? Or perhaps they're lowering the fees? We don't know. And will they actually see a decrease in the collection of the fees for administration?

And as you can imagine, I know that the Ministry of the Economy and the oil and energy . . . I don't know what the name of the sector is now, but energy, the sector for the Ministry of the Economy has a number of staff, and that proper oversight for managing that industry does take considerable resources. And, Mr. Speaker, with the addition of pipelines now and the requirement for licensing of pipelines, we know there is going to be an additional demand on the resources that the ministry will need to properly enforce the law.

I've heard a number of complaints, you know, from mostly in the southeast area of the province where there aren't enough

officials right now that are able to enforce the law, and in fact some officials are, you know, finding it difficult to enforce the law because of certain restrictions that are being placed on them. So there's some real concerns where people live.

And I think I talked about this recently. I spoke to a gentleman who was, before Christmas, was knocked out by sour gas in his yard, right where he lives. And he's so scared now about that happening that they can't even have their grandchildren come visit them in their own home, because they're so terrified that this sour gas could actually kill. Because as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does kill. So despite trying to find out where it came from, they're having real difficulty with that, and it just seems like they're not getting the help they need. And I know other people have a lot of concerns about venting and flaring and sour gas in other parts of the patch, especially down where the Bakken play is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's fine to extend this levy or this tax to pipelines in addition to wells. It's fine to change the name to an administrative levy. But the question is, will this government be able to enforce? Will this government be able to have the proper oversight that is needed? And I think a good example of that is, and the minister himself raised this, is ongoing regulatory activities related to pipeline approvals and inspections.

We know right now that the public can't even get a copy of the ministry's report on the Husky pipeline spill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Apparently it's completed. And despite the fact that the Privacy Commissioner suggested that it should be released last December, even though it is going forward for prosecutorial consultations, that report should be released and the public should be able to have access to that information. And so again, what's going on? We'll have to ask in committee. We're going to have to ask a lot of questions around where that report is at, what the findings are. And certainly there's no reason for the ministry to say we shouldn't be releasing this, because I think the Privacy Commissioner was very clear.

Also we had asked for a number of other inspection records from other pipelines, and we weren't even able to get those through the freedom of information process, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So it's very frustrating from the public side to know what's going on. Can we have confidence in the inspection process? Is there enough resources being applied? And I think we know that because of the auditor's report on pipelines . . . I think back in 2012 and it was reviewed again in 2014, and I believe it's up again for review soon. There are still recommendations that haven't been met from the 2012 report. And although the government has allocated some resources — I think one truck and maybe one or two more staff — to doing the pipeline inspections, I still think if the public were to examine closely what's happening, if we could get that information, it would show that there needs to be more attention paid to that.

Obviously, and we've always said this, the oil and gas industry is incredibly important to our economy. But we need to be sure that people are safe, that the air we breathe is safe, that the land we live on is safe, and that the water we drink is safe, Mr. Speaker. And we saw with the Husky pipeline spill last summer that it jeopardizes 70,000 people's source of drinking water. So this is not something to be taken lightly.

And although we know the administrative levies will change because pipelines will now be assessed this tax on pipelines . . . and you know, Mr. Speaker, a levy is a tax, so we can use those terms interchangeably. So putting a tax on pipelines for licensing may make sense, but it just depends on whether it raises actually the amount of money that is required for proper administration. So as I indicated, we'll have a number of questions in committee in relation to that, and I look forward to that discussion with the minister and his officials. So that would be the extent of my comments today on Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Energy and Resources that Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this House adjourns. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:38.]

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