



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

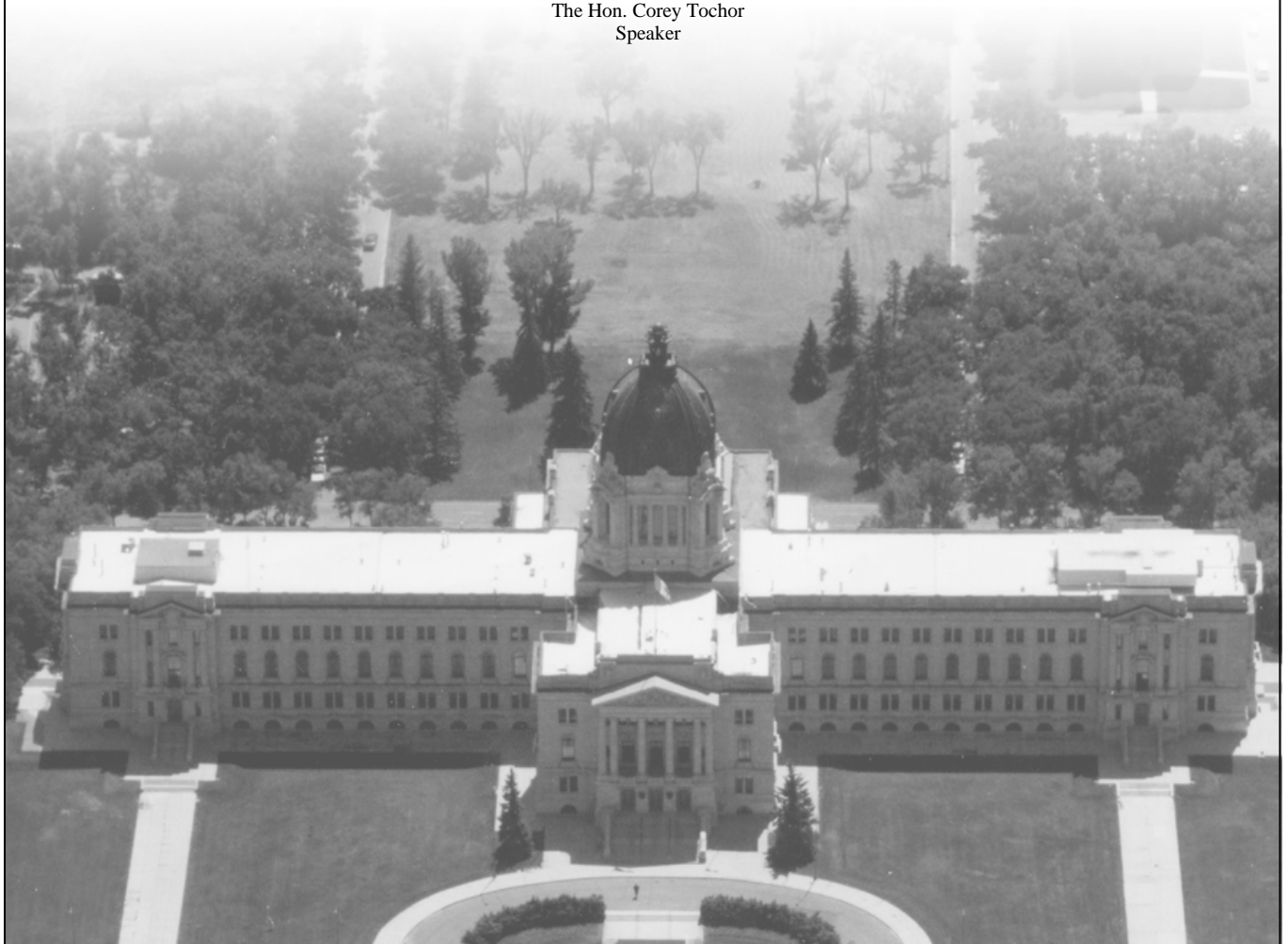
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

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Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the gallery today are a number of individuals which I'd like to introduce: Jo-Anne Dusel, executive director of PATHS [Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan], which is the provincial association of transition houses; Kirsten Lawson, the director of member programs and services from PATHS, I think is here with us as well; Crystal Giesbrecht, director of research and communications as well with PATHS; Melissa Coomber-Bendtsen, CEO [chief executive officer] of the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] here in Regina; and Hillary Aitken, senior director of housing for the YWCA here in Regina as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are in the House today. Later on we'll be discussing some issues around domestic violence, Mr. Speaker. These individuals are committed to the issue of domestic violence and helping solve that particular issue in this province. And as you know, we have a significant issue with domestic violence. So it's with work with dedicated individuals like these, Mr. Speaker, that allow us to move forward and try to do things to address a very difficult issue which we have in the province, Mr. Speaker. So they're here to witness some events that will happen in legislature a little bit later on. So I'd ask all members of the legislature to help welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to join with the minister opposite to welcome these folks to their Legislative Assembly: Melissa Coomber-Bendtsen and Hillary Aitken with the YWCA; Crystal Giesbrecht, Jo-Anne Dusel, and Kirsten Lawson with PATHS. I've had the opportunity to work with all of them, both on the issue of domestic violence as well as some other work.

I'm very happy to have all of you here today, and I'm very excited for the reason why you're here, and I'm looking forward to further discussions on this matter. So I'd like all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce 50 very enthusiastic grade 8 and grade 12 students from Langenburg Central School. This will be the first graduating class from the new Langenburg school. And accompanying them today are Ms. Fallon Prince, who used to be my neighbour, Ms. Emma Castle who is one of our new teachers, and the educational assistant, Ms. Joanne Fuhr. And I'd like all members to welcome the Langenburg Central School to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Chartier: — To you and through you to all members of this House it's my pleasure to welcome some folks from the Saskatchewan Dental Hygienists' Association here today. There's members on both sides of the House who had an opportunity to meet with this group today at lunch, and they will continue our education a little bit later this afternoon as well, providing us information on how they can better serve people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome . . . There's a list of 10 of them here today. I'd like to first welcome their president, Janel Parkinson. You can give us a little wave. We have Kellie Watson, who is the registrar and the executive director. We have Kaitlyn Fieger, Leanne Huvenaars, Nancy Newby, Paula Benbow, Ondina Love, Chris Gordon. I have to give a special shout-out to Chris Gordon. She's a bit of a saint. She lives next to two Chartier families. Actually my one brother lives on one side of her and the other lives across the street, so that takes a pretty special person to live in such close proximity to so many Chartiers, Mr. Speaker. Gerrard Weinberger, Sharman Woynarski. And with that, I'd like to ask all members to welcome these folks to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to join with the Health critic opposite in welcoming the Dental Hygienists' Association here. As she mentioned, there was a luncheon today for a number of our colleagues and there will be a reception at 5 o'clock today. I look forward to speaking at that and to meeting all the members and talking to them at that event.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to please join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member opposite as well as the minister in welcoming, particularly Melissa and Hillary from the YWCA. They're very important partners in my ministry, Mr. Speaker. In addition to working with us on the cold weather strategy, they're also very important partners in our child and

family services programs. They're great leaders in our community, and I'd like to just join with the other members in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Churchbridge. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. The people who have signed this petition are opposed to the Sask Party's plan to scrap and sell off the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. They would like us all to know that STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] provides a vital service to many seniors, workers, families throughout the province; and that by scrapping STC out of the blue and without asking permission of the owners, the Saskatchewan people, the Sask Party is sending a clear sign about how little they care about protecting our Crowns like SaskTel; and that STC helps to drive the economy with its parcel services that serves farms and other businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately stop the plan to scrap and sell off Saskatchewan Transportation Company, and to resume transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

It is supported and signed by many good people of the province. I so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition today to improve the oral health of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners point out that citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned that our province has the third-highest rate of day surgeries for treating oral disease in Canada, only behind Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, costing the provincial government \$3.3 million each year; that they point out that the rates of oral disease will only increase in our province as a result of the closure of the last dental therapy school and increasing number of oral health human resources

vacancies in the North.

The petitioners also point out that Saskatchewan's 650 registered dental hygienists are highly educated primary care providers committed to addressing the unmet oral health needs of Saskatchewan residents. They point out that *The Dental Disciplines Act* severely limits the ability of registered dental hygienists to deliver many necessary services directed to the people of Saskatchewan; and as well they point out that preventing and managing oral disease will reduce the burden on emergency rooms, reduce backlogs for acute care services, improve productivity, and enhance the overall health and well-being of residents in Saskatchewan. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps and actions to address the oral health needs of the people of Saskatchewan by updating *The Dental Disciplines Act* to remove restrictions and expand dental hygiene profession's scope of practice.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Saskatoon, Hepburn, Hague, Warman, Rosthern, Osler, and other places, just to name a few. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in my place to answer the call from the member from Prince Albert Northcote for anyone, someone in the Assembly to help her in her battle for a second bridge for Prince Albert. So I rise in my place to offer that support. And the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products to Prince Albert require a solution. So the prayer reads as follows:

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

And as I say every day, Mr. Speaker, of this Assembly, again I am presenting yet another page day after day of people that are supporting the call for a second bridge in Prince Albert, and the people that have signed this particular page are primarily from Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am rising to present a petition opposed to Bill 40 and the potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. People who have signed this bill want to bring to our attention the following: Sask Party's Bill 40 creates a new, unheard-of 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.

And now we know, Mr. Speaker, in '15-16 alone, our Crown

corporations returned around \$300 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. Over the last 10 years we've received over \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker, for schools, roads, and hospitals. Our Crown corporations employ thousands of people from Saskatchewan, across the province. And under section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* of Canada, we know the Crown corporations are exempt from corporate income tax, provided not less than 90 per cent of the shares are held by a government or province. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that this government has the intention to sell off 49 per cent of SaskTel, and this is something that is not acceptable to the people of Saskatchewan, particularly without a referendum.

So 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 people who've signed these petitions today come from the communities of Melville, Yorkton, and Bredenbury. I so submit.

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

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 the term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition 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 rise today to present a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Prince Albert mobile crisis has had to close its door during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resources to people in distress.

Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert we have high rates of domestic violence, and we know those situations happen at any time, 24 hours, 7 days a week. And without having the mobile crisis unit available to present to these situations . . . Those crisis workers are trained to handle situations such as this. They know of all the resources that are available, and they know how to investigate a situation and ensure that safety is provided for all members of the family. And so it's really important to have this funding restored to mobile crisis so they can provide the daytime services that are much needed in the city of Prince Albert.

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

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, people across the province realize that this is a situation that needs to be resolved, and these particular petitions are signed by individuals from the city of Prince Albert, the city of Saskatoon, and the city of Regina. I do so present.

[13:45]

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

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

Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: to the fact that Saskatchewan has the second-highest rate of sexual child abuse in Canada; that statistics show that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18, according to statistics, Mr. Speaker. Up to 90 per cent of perpetrators are known to the victim, and it is estimated that 95 per cent of these cases will never get reported. Victims of childhood sexual abuse are four times more likely to commit suicide, and currently there is no comprehensive elementary or secondary curriculum regarding prevention and reporting of sexual child abuse in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan take immediate and

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

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed the petition today reside in Weyburn and Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for fairer treatment for licensed, non-profit child care centres. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that such centres are taxed inconsistently throughout Saskatchewan. They point out that many of our licensed, non-profit child care centres pay commercial property taxes, something which is not done in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, BC [British Columbia], and New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, they also point out that child care is essential to the economy, yet most centres struggle to balance their budgets; and that this issue threatens both the number of child care spaces and the quality of care.

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

That the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan recognize that licensed non-profit child care centres provide programs that are foundational to a healthy society by including them in the Saskatchewan education Act, and that they exempt all licensed, non-profit child care centres in Saskatchewan from property tax through changes to the appropriate legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there's an opportunity to do this in the days ahead. And this particular petition is signed by individuals from Weyburn and Regina ... Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, 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 reverse cuts to Saskatchewan libraries. The Sask Party has cut funding for regional libraries in half or by \$3.5 million and eliminated funding for libraries in Regina and Saskatoon. This drastic funding cut will have a devastating impact on libraries, especially regional libraries and the many people who depend on them. And I think we saw that support at the Friday rally across the province, Mr. Speaker. And if I saw correctly, the number of participants in that rally is counted at around 5,600 people, Mr. Speaker.

Libraries are a vital part of communities across Saskatchewan, and the services they provide enrich the lives of many. The drastic cuts imposed on libraries will lead to branch closures, program cuts, and reductions in hours, which will hurt the many people who use library services and the hard-working and dedicated public servants who work in libraries.

Libraries are about more than borrowing books, Mr. Speaker. Meeting rooms are used by community groups, library staff host education programs and clubs, and the publicly accessible computer terminals are essential to many. There are services for seniors, children, employment support, language and reading groups, citizenship test preparation, and help for newcomers to build their resumé.

These cuts will have a disproportionate impact on rural communities where libraries are vital community spaces. Potential closures or reductions in services will severely impact our communities.

And speaking of reduction in services, Mr. Speaker, I saw on the Regina Public Library website that the interlibrary loan system has been shut down as of today. So effective today, any holds of materials located outside of your branch have been suspended, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

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

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and present a petition calling on the government to restore funding to post-secondary institutions. Mr. Speaker, the contribution of our post-secondary institutions to the economy of this province, to the future prospects of young people, and to our understanding of the world is invaluable. And instead of recognizing it as invaluable, the Sask Party seems to think it shouldn't be valued at all.

The Sask Party is making students and their families pay for their financial mismanagement when students here already pay among the highest tuition fees in Canada. This budget cuts \$36.8 million from post-secondary education, cuts funding for Saskatchewan aid for students and, breaking very quickly an election promise, is also cutting the first home plan.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately restore funding to Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions and stop the damaging cuts to students.

The people signing this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon and Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

National Oral Health Month and National Dental Hygienist Week

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The month of April marks Canada's National Oral Health Month. It is a month to recognize the impact that poor oral health can have on people's lives, and to spread awareness on the good habits that can improve it.

This week, April 8th to 14th, is an especially important part of Canada's month-long oral health campaign as it marks National Dental Hygienist Week. This is a week to focus on helping Canadians understand the role and importance of the dental hygiene profession, and to promote good oral health practices. This year the theme of Dental Hygienist Week is Oral Health for Total Health.

Mr. Speaker, poor oral health can have serious effects on people's quality of life. It can influence the way a person speaks, eats, and socializes, and can have devastating effects on their physical and mental well-being of the young, old, and those in between.

According to the Canadian Dental Association, approximately 3,200 Canadians are diagnosed with oral cancer each year and relationships between oral health and other diseases have also been found. This is why we must recognize how essential our oral health professionals are, not just for our teeth, but to our overall well-being.

Mr. Speaker, taking care of our mouth, teeth, and gums can positively impact all aspects of our lives. So I would like all members to join me today in celebrating Oral Health Month and Dental Hygienist Week, and in thanking all our oral health professionals here in Saskatchewan, especially our dental hygienists here today, for the hard work they do to improve the well-being of people in our province. Thank you.

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

Balcarres Remembers the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday here in our rotunda, at war memorials across Canada, and at the Vimy monument in France, people of all ages joined together to recognize the battle of Vimy Ridge.

I would like to draw members' attention to a remembrance project from the community of Balcarres. Gordon Michayluk and Glen Larson prepared a moving tribute which includes a video and a novella which were both released yesterday to the public, 100 years after Edwin and Edison Greenhow went over the top to charge Vimy Ridge.

Edwin fell on April the 9th and Edison fell on April the 28th. Neither of their bodies were ever found. The novella, *The Boys from Balcarres*, was written by Glen Larson, great-nephew of the Greenhow brothers, and tells their story how these two young men from Balcarres fought on Vimy Ridge in April of 1917.

The video entitled *A Community Remembers: The Memorial*

Park Story tells us of the 29 trees that were planted in 1949 in Balcarres Memorial Park. One tree was planted for each lost soldier. And they survived, Mr. Speaker, until 2014 when a plow wind damaged or destroyed all 29 of the trees.

Not to be deterred, wood from the fallen trees was saved, and today two wooden carvings sit on either side of the memorial, a memorial that is a tribute to the supreme sacrifice of Edwin and Edison Greenhow and all the other lost soldiers of Balcarres and area. Lest we forget, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

First Nations University of Canada 39th Annual Powwow

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds of powwow dancers came together on the weekend to help kick off the First Nations University of Canada's 39th annual powwow. It was a packed house at the Brandt Centre, Mr. Speaker, as thousands of spectators filled the stands.

Myself along with the member from Regina Douglas Park and the member from Regina Rosemont had the honour to attend the event on Sunday and certainly enjoyed the Leader of the Opposition bringing greetings as part of the grand entry.

Mr. Speaker, the First Nations University annual spring powwow started from humble beginnings 39 years ago. Students organized the powwow to share their culture, identity, and pride with their classmates. It has now grown to one of the largest celebrations of its kind in Canada. This year there were 750 dancers, 21 drums, and nearly 7,000 spectators at the Brandt Centre in Regina to celebrate. Mr. Speaker — records on all scores.

The spring celebration powwow is the first of the season and is considered by many as the official kickoff to the annual powwow season. It's a celebration of spring and a sharing of First Nations culture that adds to the diversity and cultural mosaic of Regina and indeed Saskatchewan, through song, dance, ceremony, and craft. Along with being a very significant tourist draw, the First Nations University powwow is one of the largest of its kind, attracting visitors from right across Canada and the United States.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you very much to the organizing committee, to Chair Kevin Missens, and congratulations to Thomas Benjoe on yet another great year of a beautifully beaded powwow princess crown. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Special Olympics Saskatchewan Celebration of Champions

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, myself along with my daughter Courtney, a Special Olympian herself, and the member from Regina Pasqua attended the Special Olympics supper of champions to celebrate 13 Saskatchewan athletes who had returned home from the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Vienna.

Two athletes from Saskatchewan returned with gold medals: Ron Brandt from Saskatoon, winning the 4 x 100-metre relay in snowshoeing; and Terry Livingstone of Regina, winning the speed skating 777-metre race.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to congratulate Team Canada West floor hockey team for their well-deserved silver medal. Their team included 11 athletes from Saskatchewan under the direction of head coach Ryan Unruh of Regina.

The Special Olympics World Games is an opportunity to enrich lives of those with intellectual disabilities through sport, giving them an opportunity to showcase their talents on a world stage. The Winter Games in Austria was the biggest sports and humanitarian event anywhere in 2017 with 3,000 athletes representing 310 countries across the world. Mr. Speaker, the Celebration of Champions, which was hosted by Special Olympics Saskatchewan, was a great way to celebrate the success of all of our athletes.

I ask all members in the Assembly to join me in congratulating the athletes of Team Canada, as well as all of the Special Olympian athletes around the world for competing in this event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SaskTel Completes Cellular Network Expansion

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is proud to announce that SaskTel has successfully completed the expansion of LTE [long-term evolution] coverage throughout the province, providing Saskatchewan's largest LTE network and servicing 99 per cent of the residents in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the expanded reach of SaskTel LTE network will have a positive impact on residents living in rural Saskatchewan by providing fast, reliable communication services throughout our province. The LTE expansion project is part of SaskTel's commitment to invest over 300 million in capital in Saskatchewan this year and 1.4 billion throughout 2016 and 2021.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the existing announcement, I am reminded by a statement made by a member opposite last Thursday. The member from Saskatoon Riversdale proclaimed that "... not everyone in rural Saskatchewan has access to high-speed services and most are still on dial-up." Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the government has to correct the record. SaskTel's 260,000 Internet customers, less than 3 per cent remain on dial-up. We get it, Mr. Speaker. As always the NDP [New Democratic Party] are out of touch with rural Saskatchewan. Maybe next time the member opposite should check the facts and learn something from actually spending time in rural Saskatchewan, a place that we all know they neglected while they were in government.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, we will take no advice from the members opposite when it comes to rural Saskatchewan and will continue to invest where it counts. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

New Passenger Bus Service Between Martensville, Warman, and Saskatoon

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today and let all of my colleagues know of an exciting new business venture in my constituency. AV Transit will begin its passenger bus service between the communities of Warman, Martensville, and Saskatoon on May 1st. AV Transit is part of a larger transportation company that provides courier services as well as special-needs transportation services.

This new venture will see a 22-passenger bus run five days a week with multiple stops during the day in strategic places throughout those three cities. This service will allow commuters as well as senior citizens and others to get to and from Saskatoon easily and efficiently.

Leadership from all three cities are supportive, with the city of Saskatoon offering curbside space downtown near Saskatoon's transit bus mall. Warman's mayor said, and I quote: "It's a private business with a solid track record and a good business plan, so I think it will be very successful."

As for the cost to riders, the round trip price for a trip between Martensville and Saskatoon will be \$15. Currently STC offers a round trip for 21, which is not a huge difference, Mr. Speaker. But the real difference is this: a return trip on this new privately operated passenger bus service will not have the \$188 taxpayer-funded subsidy attached to it, as STC does.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate this company and its founders, and I wish them all the best. It is yet another example of Saskatchewan private enterprise that I am sure will succeed.

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

New Schools for Saskatoon

Ms. Lambert: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to bring attention to two new schools being built in the Rosewood neighbourhood of Saskatoon, part of the joint-use schools programs scheduled to open this fall. The schools are Saskatoon Public's École Colette Bourgonje School, and Saskatoon Catholic's École St. Thérèse of Lisieux School. This is a welcome addition to a thriving neighbourhood that continues to grow rapidly.

Our record speaks for itself. We have opened a total of 40 new schools, 21 of which are opening this year, along with 25 major renovations to existing schools. When faced with the same challenges, the NDP chose to close 176 schools, and it sounds like their attitude hasn't changed. In fact, Mr. Speaker, just last Thursday, in a response to a question about what their plan would be for Saskatchewan, the member from Regina Lakeview suggested that funding to regional libraries could be fully restored, and the cost of that could be "... well covered by the \$9.5 million in this budget going to maintain brand new P3 schools."

Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed. They are simply the old NDP. If they were in government, they would cut maintenance money to schools and let them fall into disrepair, just as they did in the past. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we are not going to do any of those things, and we will continue to keep Saskatchewan strong by meeting the challenge. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Details of Land Transactions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't like taking questions about the Sask Party's GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land scandal. He ducks questions day after day, but Saskatchewan people deserve some real answers. Instead, last week again the usual minister got up with his usual tired, irrelevant lines. And the Highways minister said that he is "not disagreeing with the Privacy Commissioner."

Well, Mr. Speaker, if that's the case, then why are they hiding the facts of the GTH land deal with CP [Canadian Pacific]? The Privacy Commissioner has been clear. These documents must be released. Mr. Speaker, the minister admitted that he hasn't even read these documents yet. They're not *War and Peace*. One is six pages long; the other one's seven pages long, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier really has nothing to hide, will he simply release these documents on the GTH sale to CP, and will he finally, will he finally commit to coming clean and being straight with Saskatchewan people on his GTH land scandal?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course the Leader of the Opposition knows the process for freedom of information requests is the exact same as it was when those members were in government. Of course the member knows that ministers are not directly involved in that process. The process is handled by professional civil servants, Mr. Speaker, in a very clear and a very well-understood process. There of course are provisions for commercial confidentiality, and we are committed to working with the Privacy Commissioner going forward, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Financial Support for Municipalities

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, of course dodging the question again, and day after day they refuse to accept any accountability. They're arrogant, Mr. Speaker, and they're out of touch.

But since the budget, day after day, Saskatchewan people have been coming together. They've been rising up and they've been speaking out. Across the province, people have been rallying against the Sask Party cuts and sell-offs: libraries, education, STC, parks, rinks, hearing aids, cities, and towns. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on. Saskatchewan people are calling out the Sask Party for not being straight to them, Mr. Speaker, for not

being straight about the cuts that they knew were coming, for not being straight and still trying to hide some of the cuts by having the cities and towns of Saskatchewan do their dirty work, Mr. Speaker.

The leaders of our cities and towns were blindsided. They say they were ambushed. And, Mr. Speaker, as they reminded us all this morning, they are united. These big, unfair tax hikes and deep cuts, Mr. Speaker, are Sask Party tax hikes and cuts. Will the Premier finally have the decency to meet with these community leaders, and will he do the right thing and reverse these cuts?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to clarify for members of the House that there was notice certainly given to the municipal sector that everything was on the table. In fact, Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite laugh, the Leader of the Opposition was at the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention. And at the SUMA convention, I indicated at that time that the government would be considering reductions in a number of areas, and the options included municipal revenue sharing. The options included grants-in-lieu. In fact I was specific about that, as were ministers of the Crown, Mr. Speaker, and we repeated that message at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities].

The fact of the matter is that when we formed government in 2007, the NDP government had been neglecting the municipal sector for well over a decade. Mr. Speaker, that relationship changed markedly, and since then revenue sharing from the Government of Saskatchewan to the towns and villages and the cities of this province has more than doubled, Mr. Speaker.

This particular budget, we faced a massive reduction in resource revenues, and we're asking those towns and cities and villages to share in under 3 per cent of that gap. Mr. Speaker, 2.5 per cent of the total gap in revenue we're asking those municipalities to share in from a position of strength. I would note that many of them have huge reserves. There is no need for them to increase taxes, Mr. Speaker, as we work towards a new relationship with that municipal sector, informed by our record, which is record revenue sharing for the municipal sector in our province.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, for that Premier to pretend that he was straight with the leaders of our cities and towns is a disgrace to the common sense leaders all across Saskatchewan. They're outraged, Mr. Speaker. In fact that's the quote. I'll quote from the Twitter feed of SUMA: "Our members are outraged, and so are we." They're angry and they're feeling betrayed, and for good reason, Mr. Speaker.

Rodger Hayward, the mayor of Naicam, said this morning that most of the towns affected by the cuts in the grants of lieu mostly haven't heard anything from the province. He pointed out that instead of consulting and working with the cities and towns, the Sask Party is introducing legislation that will take

their rights to defend themselves away.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hayward, who is also SUMA's vice-president of towns, pointed out that it's our cities and towns who:

... spent the last decade on the front lines of growth. We were doing our fair share during the boom — providing critical services and creating the quality of life we all expect in Saskatchewan. We were paying, not profiting.

So, Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier making them and all Saskatchewan people pay, pay now for the decade of Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's been a decade of record revenue sharing for the municipal sector, Mr. Speaker. It's very interesting to hear the NDP, they've found some religion on the road to Damascus when it comes to the cities and towns and villages in our province because for 16 years, including when they were sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars in a fund, they ignored the municipal sector, Mr. Speaker.

Well that changed in 2007, and now we've seen ... [inaudible interjection] ... Well they don't want to hear the answer to this question, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to hear the answer to the question because the fact of the matter is that there has been record revenue sharing with the municipal sector over the last 10 years. It has more than doubled, Mr. Speaker, since when we formed office. And if you looked at all the different increases, investments from the Government of Saskatchewan, it far exceeds the massive increases in the post-secondary sector, in the education sector, and the health sector.

The number one winner of what they call waste, I guess, has been the municipal sector revenue sharing. And now, facing over a billion dollars short of resource revenue, we're asking that same sector to share 2.5 per cent of that overall net loss in revenue, Mr. Speaker.

We know — and I've got a list here — we know the municipal sector has been able to put away, well in this case, millions of dollars in reserves in part because of the revenue sharing from the province, Mr. Speaker. Some of them say, well that's our rainy day fund. Well, Mr. Speaker, now is the time to use it as we work towards a new revenue-sharing formula. And I'm not sure how that'll be constituted, but I promise you this, it'll be markedly better than anything they got from the NDP.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's arrogant dismissal like that of common sense leaders across Saskatchewan that are losing that Sask Party support. Breaking trust with Saskatchewan people. SUMA vice-president of villages, Mike Strachan, mayor of Torquay in the heart of southeast Saskatchewan said, "We thought we were partners in building Saskatchewan, but this is not how partners act." Cities and towns are feeling betrayed all across Saskatchewan and for good reason.

Mr. Speaker, this refusal to work together is hitting our school boards hard as well, boards that are having their roles gutted and their funding cut. The minister asked the education sector to find \$5 million in savings; they found nearly 20. The Sask Party asked for a 3.5 per cent cut in wages. Now they're saying that they have to find it immediately "... through negotiated changes and total compensation and cannot be achieved through further reductions in staff levels, capturing attrition, or other cost reductions."

Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier expect to move forward if he's burning bridges with everyone from mayors to teachers? And how can we strengthen our province if he refuses to support the very people teaching our kids?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, hidden on page 46 of the budget document indicates a human resources compensation measure line item of \$250 million — not only in this budget, Mr. Speaker, for the ensuing three budgets after this — in each and every year after this, Mr. Speaker, \$250 million compensation.

The education sector, the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education sector comprises a large component of public sector wages in this province, Mr. Speaker. So I don't think it's unreasonable for the Government of Saskatchewan, in trying to achieve this \$250 million compensation savings as the funder of the K to 12 system in this province, Mr. Speaker, to ask the heads of these school boards to sit down at the negotiating table with the unions in the education sector to try to achieve that \$250 billion savings, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The question was to the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and it's about the betrayal of that government to Saskatchewan people. On front after front, the Premier and the Sask Party are showing how arrogant and out of touch they are, and we see them drinking their own bathwater instead of showing any level of contrition and respect for Saskatchewan people and the partners that build Saskatchewan. Plain and simple, they're not being straight to Saskatchewan people, and they're not showing any respect to the partners all across our province.

They weren't straight, of course, about their financial mess. They weren't straight about their plan to attack school boards and gut their roles and cut their funding. And they weren't straight with our cities and towns with their plan to cut millions, ripping up a decades-old agreement without the decency of a heads-up. And they weren't straight with Saskatchewan people about their plan to sell off our Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Premier doesn't have much interest in listening to Saskatchewan people anymore, but why didn't he, as the Premier, at least have the decency and the backbone to be straight with Saskatchewan people about his damaging plans?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as it became evident that the resource revenues for the province were not going to be coming back any time soon, we began a dialogue with Saskatchewan people. It started back after the last election in terms of transformative change initiatives on the part of the government and continued for the months since then, up to and including the meetings that we've had with the different sectors including, Mr. Speaker, the municipal sector. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have, as a result of those consultations and also as a result of our determination not to procrastinate on the deficit, Mr. Speaker, we've taken the difficult measures that are outlined in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

And I understand they're very, very difficult. They're going to affect the lives of Saskatchewan families. They represent some reductions in government expenditure. They represent some revenue changes that include some tax reductions, but very definitely some increases in taxes as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, it was the view on this side of the House that we — unlike every other province in the country — we weren't going to procrastinate on the matter of the deficit. We would outline a three-year plan to get back to balance, Mr. Speaker, which has been noted by economists from outside and within the province as the right move, including the shift, in terms of our taxation system, away from taxes on jobs and income towards taxes on consumption, Mr. Speaker.

All along we know that throughout the last 10 years or so, the different sectors around the province in education and health, and assuredly our municipal sector, have benefited greatly from when times were very good fiscally for the province. And now, Mr. Speaker, the message from this budget is that we're determined to meet the goals that we've set out to get to balance and we need third party partners of the government to join with us. And we hope that will be the case in the days ahead, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, no matter how they want to justify it, the Sask Party cuts go directly to our kids' classrooms. This is a minister who promised improved outcomes. He promised families who are watching today that he'd bring in advances in programming to improve curriculum and to be a leader in Canada to educate, inform, and protect our children.

But, Mr. Speaker, while they promised parents that they'd moved forward with education, what they're actually doing is moving us backward. How can the minister look parents in the eye and promise new programming or new curriculum when all he has done is forced cuts through our kids' classrooms, cuts to services for our kids, and the elimination of programs for children who need it most — children with autism, special needs, and those who've experienced trauma?

Can the minister explain to students, teachers, and parents across this province, why is he so dead set on taking Saskatchewan education backwards?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite I would say this and I would say this to the families in the province: we are committed to children. We are committed to students. We are committed to the schools in our province.

Last week one of the Regina school divisions indicated it was cutting some programs. Those programs were not within the funding envelope or ordinarily provided by the province. Mr. Speaker, we've indicated that we would not approve their budget if those things were not continued. Mr. Speaker, we have ongoing discussions with the school divisions, and we will work to ensure that those programs continue because we value those programs. Those programs were not funded under the NDP. They were not funded by this government, but we are for sure going to continue them.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, with lines like that, I'm not sure who the minister is trying to convince, us or himself. Last week he was quick to say that there weren't any cuts to classrooms in the Chinook School Division, but this minister knows that Chinook took an enormous hit in the budget. And he knows that there were cuts and more to come.

Does the minister think that speech and language skills are not essential for a kid's success in the classroom? Does he think that access to a counsellor for behavioural issues is not essential to the success of students in the classroom? And does he not understand why people are worried that he seems to think that he knows best?

The president of the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] said with the "... loss of our ability to make decisions in the best interest of our communities, it's really easy to understand why folks are stressed." It definitely is, Mr. Speaker.

With this minister's track record, why should the people of Saskatchewan have any faith in his ability when it comes to our kids' education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had read everything that come from Chinook, she would know that the services she's referring to are in fact being continued. Mr. Speaker, she would also know this: that Chinook has chosen to move 25 administrators out of administration into the classroom. Mr. Speaker, all of us should be commending and thanking Chinook, and using Chinook as an example.

I would say this to the other school divisions in the province: look to Chinook for what they've done. Are there things that Chinook has done that other divisions should do as well? Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members opposite to read carefully,

understand what Chinook does. It has shown a great deal of leadership, and for that we thank them.

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

Funding for Libraries

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that minister has forgotten who he works for, but the people of Saskatchewan have not. Last week over 5,800 people came together across the province to rally against the Sask Party's damaging cuts to our public libraries. There were read-ins held in front of MLAs' [Member of the Legislative Assembly] offices across the province from Estevan to Assiniboia, from Meadow Lake to Prince Albert, and everywhere in between. And all across the province, Mr. Speaker, the message was clear: Saskatchewan people are against the Sask Party's damaging cuts to our libraries.

Our libraries are so much more to their communities than books alone. They're meeting spaces and they are community hubs, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people are worried about the devastating effects that these drastic cuts will have on their communities. So will the minister finally listen and reverse these damaging cuts?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, difficult decisions had to be made in order to meet the fiscal challenges that our province is facing. We've been clear that we want to work with our libraries to adjust how they deliver their services within the available funding levels. The reality is that we know the number of items checked out of public libraries has dropped by 1.6 million items since 2007. During that time we've significantly increased municipal revenue. Between libraries, municipalities, and school divisions, we believe there are enough resources to meet the existing demand for library services. We are going to work with the libraries in our province and look for a solution.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, there's one library for every 4,000 people, 306 libraries for 1.2 million people. Manitoba, one library . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, if they don't want to hear the answer, maybe they'd like to look it up on their own. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba, one library for every 10,000 people, 128 libraries for 1.3 million people. In Alberta, one library for every 14,000 people, 307 libraries for 4.2 million.

Well if they don't like the numbers, Mr. Speaker, they're real. They're actual numbers, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I would urge them to sit down, have a look at it, and think, are there better ways we can deliver service? Can we move libraries into schools? Are there economies to be had?

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

Carbon Capture and Storage Facility

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the fact is the Sask Party's cuts are the results of billions they have thrown away through their own mismanagement, scandal, and waste. And CCS [carbon

capture and storage] is just one example, and it's still plagued by problems, Mr. Speaker. Average CO₂ [carbon dioxide] collected in the last two months was the lowest it's been in the last year.

So, Mr. Speaker, what exactly was the Premier doing in Washington? He went to sell technology that we don't own and that they haven't gotten to work properly that is supposed to turn cheap energy into extremely expensive energy because it's supposed to capture carbon, which is a pollutant that the American government has decided they no longer want to measure because they don't want to monitor climate change, which is the whole point of this project in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, when will they finally acknowledge that they have failed with CCS and that it has caused four power rate hikes in the past two years, and it's really just a \$1.5 billion carbon capture tax?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskPower.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, we have the cleanest fossil fuel plant in Canada and we should be very proud of that, Mr. Speaker. Three hundred and fifty thousand cars off the road, given the amount of carbon that's been captured as a result of what's happening at BD3 [Boundary dam 3], Mr. Speaker, and this technology is being embraced around the world, Mr. Speaker.

Technology and research is one of the keys, Mr. Speaker, with respect to reducing our carbon footprint, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you this: there's people all around the world, Mr. Speaker, a number of carbon capture plants are being built, Mr. Speaker. Our technology is important in terms of trying to reduce our carbon footprint, Mr. Speaker.

But as far as the plant is concerned, Mr. Speaker, this plant will be down for regular scheduled maintenance from time to time, Mr. Speaker. We are on target, Mr. Speaker, for capturing 250 000 tonnes of CO₂, or 800 000 tonnes of CO₂, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue on that, Mr. Speaker, but the plant does have to come down for maintenance from time to time.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, they can brag all they want, but facts are facts and reality is reality, and the Sask Party seems to understand neither. Time and time again they've proven they can't get this thing to work as it's supposed to, Mr. Speaker.

\$1.5 billion and that doesn't include the tens of millions that they've spent recently on amine, Mr. Speaker. It's a solution that is essential to the process, but at Boundary dam 3, it's been a problem from the start. First they built a hand-tiled special containment tank; it leaked. So they chiselled out a moat — yes, Mr. Speaker, a moat. It's as ridiculous as it sounds. And now they've replaced the tank, but the problems persist.

In the last two years, they're spending \$40 million to clean and replace the amine alone. Mr. Speaker, that's double the cost of the Sask Party cut to libraries and STC combined. So why is the

Sask Party pretending it's okay to keep making Saskatchewan people pay for this massive Sask Party failure?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskPower.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, the cost of the amine solution is coming down, Mr. Speaker. It's an integral part of the process, Mr. Speaker, and the member knows that. She's toured the plant, Mr. Speaker, and she's made some very positive comments with respect to the commitment. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue our commitment with respect to reducing carbon emissions at SaskPower, and carbon capture is just one of those, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly it's leading-edge technology, Mr. Speaker. It's first-generation technology. But there's many people around the world, including the Americans, Mr. Speaker, who have expressed a continuing interest in exploring this technology, Mr. Speaker. The know-how, the know-how and the technology that's been developed at BD3, Mr. Speaker, will be very, very helpful to those people as they move forward to remove their carbon emissions, Mr. Speaker. And we'll continue down this road, Mr. Speaker. It's important to the people of Saskatchewan, and it's important to the people of this country.

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

Provision of Hearing Services

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, it was a weekend of mobilizing and rallying against this government's short-sighted budget cuts. On Friday families and concerned citizens rallied in Saskatoon against the cuts to the hearing aid plan. They expressed frustration about the lack of contact and information coming from the ministry. There was no consultation and no information about what these cuts mean.

Mr. Speaker, wait-lists to see audiologists are already long, and there is no plan to help the remaining audiologists manage this workload. When asked about how many audiologists would be providing these services after these cuts, the minister could not provide an answer. So I'll try again. Can the minister answer now how many publicly funded audiologists will be left after the hearing program is dismantled?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To clarify, ministry staff are right now working with the health regions to determine the exact amount of FTEs [full-time equivalent] that will be impacted.

But, Mr. Speaker, the tone of the questions from the member opposite both last week and today talks about all the cuts in programs. She talked about cuts to children's programs. Mr. Speaker, that's not the case. Mr. Speaker, the only cut is to the hearing aid program itself. The cochlear implant, the bone device, the infant screening — all that remains unchanged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard all through question period the members opposite keep talking about Sask Party cuts. Well, Mr.

Speaker, yes, it's the Sask Party government and we've been very open and transparent about where the cuts will be.

Mr. Speaker, if they want to talk about cuts . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well again, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear it. Mr. Speaker, if they want to talk about cuts, how about cuts in health care? How about 1,200 fewer long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker? How about 19 fewer long-term care facilities? How about 400 less hospital beds? How about 52 less hospitals, Mr. Speaker? Those were all NDP cuts.

Mr. Speaker, under the Sask Party, how about ribbon cuttings to the hospital in Moose Jaw, ribbon cuttings to the soon-to-be-finished children's hospital in Saskatoon? And how about, Mr. Speaker, ribbon cuttings to 13 long-term care facilities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Saskatchewan Benefits From New Canadian Free Trade Agreement

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just in time for Canada's 150th birthday, I'm pleased to announce to the House that Saskatchewan has signed the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Trade between our nation's 10 provinces and three territories creates jobs and economic growth from coast to coast to coast. It amounts to over \$400 billion, representing close to one-fifth of Canada's GDP [gross domestic product], also amounting to 40 per cent of provincial and territorial foreign exports. The Bank of Canada believes that the reduction of interprovincial trade barriers would have the similar economic benefit as CETA [Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement] or TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership], a forecasted benefit of approximately \$25 billion for Canada's economy.

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement will introduce a number of changes to enhance the flow of goods and services and improve investment opportunities in Canada. The new agreement will lower procurement, regulatory, trade, and investment barriers across our economic sectors.

Under CFTA [Canadian Free Trade Agreement], Saskatchewan companies will be able to bid on a much wider range of government contracts across Canada. Suppliers will also gain access to better dispute resolution if they have a complaint regarding specific procurement, which in our province will be similar to the bid protest mechanism available under the New West Partnership Trade Agreement, which we know the NDP opposed. The CFTA also includes an ambitious approach to address the burdens shouldered by business as a result of different regulatory regimes across the country.

Provincial, territorial, or federal governments can submit an issue causing a regulatory barrier to the new Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table. A working group with representatives from all parties will then begin negotiating a regulatory reconciliation agreement to remove the barrier.

The CFTA also commits to future improvements to trade in Canada. Negotiations will begin to determine the coverage of the financial services sector in the next two years, and a working group will begin an analysis of opportunities to improve trade in alcoholic beverages and report back to governments with their recommendations within a year.

I'm pleased to say that Saskatchewan played a central role in the negotiations which spanned 21 rounds in two and a half years. The new CFTA will replace the Agreement on Internal Trade as a modernized trade agreement that will help business be more productive, create jobs, and grow the economy for the benefit of all Canadians by reducing internal trade barriers. I very much hope we're going to have the support of the official opposition. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and first I'd like to say, you know, thank you very much to the minister for providing in advance a copy of the remarks to better inform the critique of the opposition the hour later. So we're thankful for that, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess I'd just start with one point to make, is that this of course replaces the Agreement on Internal Trade, the AIT, which has been in effect since 1995, Mr. Speaker. And I'd also point out that certainly that was in effect under the then Romanow government, which if memory serves, Mr. Speaker, was an NDP government. And, Mr. Speaker, if memory also serves in terms of the New West Partnership Agreement, in terms of the points that members opposite like to make and just recently, Mr. Speaker, just as recently as not three or four minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the opposition to the New West Partnership Agreement. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd say in that regard, one of the things that we wanted to see as a government was better work on the Agreement on Internal Trade and as such, Mr. Speaker, we're glad to see the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement replacing that agreement coming forward. So we're glad to see this agreement coming forward, Mr. Speaker.

We of course will be looking to see what proof is precisely in the pudding as regards the way this automatically impacts. We also note with interest, Mr. Speaker, that despite all the time it's taken to get to this stage, Mr. Speaker, that they've punted on alcoholic beverages for another day, Mr. Speaker. So despite the congratulations on, despite the congratulations to themselves on these measures, Mr. Speaker, we have yet to see what happens with alcoholic beverages. And the minister continues to yell from his chair, Mr. Speaker, you know, a study in dignity, I'm sure.

Anyway what happens with this, Mr. Speaker, and how different measures like the free government office space that was put up as an incentive to try and bring companies to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, how that was all square by the northwest partnership agreement, let alone the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement, Mr. Speaker, we'll be looking at that with great interest, Mr. Speaker.

But this is a good announcement and we shouldn't take away from that, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure that members will have

plenty to shout about from their chairs in the days to come. But thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to join the debate.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 66 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur les victimes d'actes criminels*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce and consider all stages of Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* later this day.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has requested leave to introduce all and consider all stages of Bill 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* later this day. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Leave has been granted. I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General may proceed to move second reading of this bill. I recognize the minister.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 66 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur les victimes d'actes criminels*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to move second reading of *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017*. This bill, Mr. Speaker, will expand access to victims compensation programs for family members of victims of violent crime.

Mr. Speaker, *The Victims of Crime Act, 1995* establishes the victims compensation program to provide financial support to individuals who have suffered harm as a result of violent crime. Through the program, victims are eligible for reimbursement for numerous expenses including medical services, counselling

costs, or loss of earnings. Under the Act, financial support is also available to a category of individuals known as secondary victims, who can apply for compensation for counselling costs with respect to a victim's death. Mr. Speaker, the current definition of secondary victims under the Act is limited to a spouse or a child of an adult victim and the parent or sibling of a child victim. Mr. Speaker, this bill will expand the definition of secondary victim to also include the parents, siblings, and adult children of adult victims, allowing those individuals to receive compensation for counselling costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Justice has received several requests from individuals as well as community organizations to expand the victims compensation program to include these family members of adult victims. This bill is a direct response to those requests. The proposed changes demonstrate the government's commitment to supporting victims of violent crime, and complement other regulatory updates that have expanded supports available under the victims compensation program. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to thank the minister and his officials for his work on this bill and their work on this bill, and providing us the opportunity to stand here today. We of the official opposition are pleased to see *The Victims of Crime Act* be expanded to allow for more individuals to access needed services like counselling and medical services.

Although we do see this as a positive step forward, we can and must do more and it is incumbent on all of us to continue to challenge ourselves to ensure that we are helping all that we can for victims of crime. We should listen to the calls that we have heard to make this legislation retroactive. And when discussing this bill it's important that we do not forget the victims of the La Roche shooting and push this government to do more in supporting those in the North. The opposition continues to be open to working with the government whenever we can work together to improve the lives of Saskatchewan people, and we are pleased to do so on this legislation today.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime 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 Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I designate that Bill 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the

Committee of the Whole on Bills and that the said bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills later this day.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 67 — *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce and consider all stages of Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* later this day.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has requested leave to introduce and consider all stages of Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* later this day. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Leave has been granted. I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General may proceed to move second reading of this bill.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, before second reading, I wish to announce to the Assembly that the receipt of a Royal Recommendation for this bill was not received in time to appear on the order paper. Therefore I beg to inform the Assembly that the Administrator, having been informed of the subject matter of Bill 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act*, recommends it for consideration of the Assembly.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 67 — *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second

reading of Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*. This Act will amend *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Act* and *The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* to introduce a program that will allow tenants who are victims of interpersonal violence to end their tenancy agreement on 28 days notice without penalty. It will also create a regulation-making power that could be used to establish an electronic registry of protection orders.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will affect a victim of interpersonal violence who is a tenant in a fixed-term tenancy, which is a tenancy with a specific end date. Normally the tenancy cannot be ended until the end of the term; however, this bill gives the tenant new rights. If the tenant or a dependent child of the tenant living with the tenant or a dependant adult for whom the tenant is responsible is at risk of interpersonal violence by continuing to reside in a particular residential premises, the tenant may apply for a certificate from an authorized person that will allow that person to terminate the lease on 28 days notice.

The certificate will be given by an authorized person from victim services based upon receipt of an application accompanied by one of: an emergency order, intervention order, a victim's assistance order, a restraining order, peace bond, or other similar order. As well, a statement from a social worker, police officer, victims service worker, or a person employed in a transition house or shelter can be used to support the application. The certificate will be issued if the authorized person is satisfied that there is a safety risk to the tenant, the tenant's child, or an adult dependent on the tenant if the tenancy continues. Mr. Speaker, if the victim serves the landlord with the certificate, the victim and the victim's children and dependent adults can leave the residential premises and request the security deposit be applied against the rent owing for the notice period. The action will also end the lease for any cohabitant of the victim.

Mr. Speaker, we're confident that the landlords are supportive of efforts to enhance the safety of their tenants and we thank them for this important contribution to the support of victims.

Mr. Speaker, the Act will also provide the ability to establish an electronic registry of protection orders. Such a registry would assist police and other service providers in knowing instantly whether a particular person has been found to be at risk. When the registry is developed it will be done with the privacy of the victim as a primary consideration. This bill is an important step in demonstrating that Saskatchewan takes interpersonal violence seriously and is moving to reduce it and assist victims.

Mr. Speaker, I would note that this bill does not address the issue of leave for victims of interpersonal violence. We are looking at a number of options to address those outstanding concerns. One of these options may include an inter-ministerial working group which will look at the development of further legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the opposition for their cooperation on addressing this very important issue. So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General

has moved second reading of Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

[14:45]

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I would like to thank the Minister of Justice and his officials for his work on this bill. Saskatchewan has the very dubious distinction of having the highest rate of domestic violence amongst all Canadian provinces. As legislators we know that we are not able to single-handedly solve this crisis. We alone cannot end this terrible reality. However there are many things we can and therefore must do. Starting a dialogue is one important step. The discussion around intimate partner violence is not a comfortable one, but it is one that cannot be pushed to the sidelines and it cannot be ignored.

Another important step is ensuring that we are doing all we can to support survivors of domestic violence. As legislators we have a duty to act on this. Legislation most certainly does play a role. Mr. Speaker, survivors of interpersonal violence often have to flee their homes to escape a dangerous situation. All too often they feel re-victimized and trapped.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am heartened to say that this bill will address those concerns. It provides help over that otherwise seemingly insurmountable obstacle that many face, and it is a positive step forward. Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan we have shelters that are full and wait-lists that are astronomical in numbers. Today was an important step that cannot be the final step. We need to continue to address interpersonal violence through legislative initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to thank the stakeholders who've worked tirelessly to advocate for this and additional legislative changes. You are at the front lines of this crisis and, on a personal note, you have done so much to help me and my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Centre, in the development of our bill to address this and other obstacles. Our gratitude and admiration for your important work is boundless. You are a hero to so many women and children.

We will continue to advocate for protections in the workplace related to interpersonal violence, two of those initiatives that make up the other two-thirds of our bill, Bill 603. We have heard from many during our consultations and through the petitions that I've been presenting daily that this is desperately needed. We look forward to the government initiating a domestic violence strategy and we hope to see it accompanied by a funded and concrete action plan.

Again we applaud the government for taking this step and look forward to working with them in the future on more legislative changes needed to support survivors of intimate partner violence.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence 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 Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I designate that Bill 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills and that the said bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills later this day.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 326 through 333.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered responses to questions 136 to 243.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Principal Clerk: — Committee of the Whole on Bills.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BILLS

Bill No. 66 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur les victimes d'actes criminels*

The Chair: — The first item of business before the committee is Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017*. I'd ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chair, Darcy McGovern, Q.C. [Queen's Counsel] from legislative services is here today. Neil Karkut from legislative services is also here.

The Chair: — Okay. Seeing no members on their feet, we'll proceed to clause 1, short title. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as

follows: Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017*.

I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 66 be reported without amendment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Bill No. 67 — *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*

The Chair: — The last item of business before the committee is Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 1 to 8 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*.

I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Chair: — The Minister of Justice has moved that the committee report Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* without amendment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to

report Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* without amendment.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 66 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur les victimes d'actes criminels*

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 66, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2017* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* without amendment.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the minister.

Bill No. 67 — *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017*

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 67, *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Amendment Act, 2017* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again?

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 15(3), I request unanimous consent to withdraw Bill No. 603, *The Critical Support for Victims of Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act* from the order paper.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Douglas Park has requested unanimous consent to withdraw Bill No. 603, the critical support for victims of domestic violence Act from the order paper. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Unanimous consent has been granted. The member for Douglas Park may proceed to move her motion.

BILL WITHDRAWN

Bill No. 603 — *The Critical Support for Victims of Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act*

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move to withdraw Bill No. 603, *The Critical Support for Victims of Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act* from the order paper.

The Speaker: — The member for Douglas Park has moved to withdraw Bill No. 603, the critical support for victims of domestic violence Act from the order paper. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This bill is ordered to be withdrawn from the order paper.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 63 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur l'éducation*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*. Several amendments are proposed to *The Education Act, 1995* and are required to be in place by September 1, 2017.

Other than housekeeping amendments, the purpose of this bill is to provide the minister with the authority to issue directives to the education sector related to school board governance and administration such as trustee compensation rates, expenditures of capital, and operating funds provided by government. Many of these amendments are as a result of public and education sector feedback received during the review consultations following Dan Perrins's education governance review report.

[15:00]

A significant number of sections pertaining to board of education powers, responsibilities, and administration, as well as other school division administration matters, have been repealed with the intention to move them to regulations, which will then be drafted with input from the education sector. It will result in changes which will enable and, where appropriate, require school divisions to implement a sector purchasing and services initiative to achieve efficiencies in areas such as transportation and bulk purchasing. It will also allow us to move forward on creating a common salary grid for school division management, standardizing board member costs, and reinforcing the value of school community councils as a vital part of school division governance. It will also provide the minister oversight on student success targets and financial decisions.

The first amendment being proposed is to repeal section 4.1. Mr. Speaker, that section is related to the Education Scholarship Fund. A new provision will be added allowing the minister to provide bursaries, scholarships, or awards to students. This will streamline the government process and provide the authority to make scholarship payments directly from the ministry.

The next amendment is in regard to the authority to approve designated schools in section 180. Removing the requirement from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to approve which schools offer French programming, and allowing the Ministry of Education's authority will make the process less onerous for schools.

Mr. Speaker, next are two housekeeping amendments related to the conseil scolaire, repealing the requirement concerning loans for current expenditures in section 320, as it is no longer valid, and repealing the requirement for guarantee of loans for capital and operating costs obtained by the conseil scolaire in sections 322 and 370. These provisions are no longer needed due to amendments in 2012, which reworded borrowing sections of the Act to include both school divisions and the conseil scolaire.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are amendments regarding school divisions in the conseil scolaire. The first amendment is to section 4, 4.01 and 4.02. This amendment is to provide clarity surrounding the Minister of Education's authorization to issue directives to boards of education and the conseil scolaire, as required. The second is clarifying the requirements pertaining to the appointment of an auditor, the authority of the auditor concerning boards of education and the conseil scolaire, and the provision of records to the minister in sections 283.1 and 283.2. And third, in sections 312 and 315, is placing further terms and conditions on the use of operating and capital funding.

The next amendment pertains to mortgages for housing in section 329, proposing to update the cross-reference, and remove the "notwithstanding" phrase. Due to the wording of the current Act, this phrase is no longer needed. There is also an amendment to section 239 where we require both parties agree to binding arbitration rather than just one. This change is consistent with the approach that requires agreement of both parties in order to engage in binding interest arbitration.

The final amendment proposed, Mr. Speaker, will correct the French language terminology in the French version of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard some concern expressed about how these amendments will be implemented, and I can assure the divisions we are going to sit down with them and work through the details. We are always open and willing to listen. The school divisions are our partners in education, and we value the relationship we have and we want to work with them to ensure that we are all focused on achieving the goals laid out in the education sector strategic plan.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017* be read a second time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am again pleased to rise in my place today to give the initial comments around Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to start off with my initial comments on this particular bill as, well, well, well. Here we go again. This is the government, Mr. Speaker, a year ago hid all the facts from the people of Saskatchewan and also hid a lot of the issues that surround the viability of our school divisions and their role, and the need to have local voices contribute in any way, shape, and form to the quality and the determination and, of course, the development of our young children's education plans, now and certainly into the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the bill itself and I want to point out to the people of Saskatchewan . . . The first point I would make out is, where in all of the discussions prior to the last election did the minister talk to the people of Saskatchewan — and more particularly the school board trustees — about what they have planned as it pertains to the autonomy of the local school divisions?

And as we look at what this bill is certainly saying to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker . . . And I want to explain that in a few seconds here. But the bill that is before the House is a bill that nobody in Saskatchewan has seen for many, many years in terms of really eliminating a lot of the authority of the local school divisions, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that the people of Saskatchewan had no idea that this particular bill was coming forward.

And I want to summarize, Mr. Speaker, summarize for the people that are listening what this bill really does. This bill gives the Minister of Education the power to issue directives to school divisions — and I want to underline the word "directives" — to school divisions with respect to the number of approved trustees, their compensation levels, and the spending of capital and operating funding provided by the government.

This bill also removes the following rules out of the Act and into the regulations: things like trustees' conflict of interest, disqualification of trustees, board meetings, quorum for school division meetings, voting at school division meetings, remuneration for trustees, the general duties and powers of the

school division board, school closures, special and annual meetings of electors, and the submission of school division budgets as well as changes to the school division boundaries and the establishment of new school divisions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that as we look . . . as one of the northern members, we look at any impact it may have to our northern boards of education, whether it is the Creighton School Division or the Ile a la Crosse School Division or the Northern Lights School Division. There's one part of the Act under subsection 194(4) in which this Act removes provision for room and board in that section, which may impact students from the far north who travel south to finish high school.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we've indicated, one of the biggest things that people out there are asking after the fact as the minister unveils this particular board of education bill . . . I'm sorry, the bill that really challenges the authority of the local school boards, is the fact that the . . . you look at some of the sentences. Almost every single paragraph in this particular bill, in this particular Act, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, almost every single line in this Act starts off with the phrase, "The minister may by order declare the following . . ." Or the next heavily used phrase in this bill is, "The minister shall by order . . ."

So every phrase in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, really empowers the minister to make a lot of decisions on his own through rules and regulations. And the question the people of Saskatchewan have is, why did you go through the process of researching what school divisions should look like, and at the end of the day saying, we're not going to touch the school divisions and their numbers? But what they do, Mr. Speaker, through rules and regulations, is they're now stripping those school divisions of a lot of authority.

Let us not forget that's exactly what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. And those provisions are great, Mr. Speaker. All the rules and regulations that they're putting in front of the school divisions that the minister now has in total control, Mr. Speaker, is the grand total of 178 pages where they have identified changes that they're going to make that'll give the minister more authority than a local school division. And certainly they have repealed parts of the Act, Mr. Speaker, positioning the minister to decide a lot of things, a lot of issues that impact and affect our school divisions throughout the province.

So as we look at the bill itself, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of issues out there that people have shared with, you know, with the minister on many fronts. They have explained to the minister the value of education. And while I'm more familiar with the northern aspect, Mr. Speaker, I certainly am aware that many southern school boards have expressed to the minister, or some of the backbench MLAs, their ambitions around why the school divisions and why these boards need to stay intact and need to stay in charge. And this bill really takes away a lot of the authority, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the authority from the local boards.

Now as I look at some of the challenges over the years, Mr. Speaker, and I go back to my own hometown, the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse went through some very trying times in trying to assert ourselves as northern and Aboriginal people in trying to make decisions locally for our own school. And I can remember

as a young man where they had the . . . The school was actually controlled by the church when we were quite young, and many local people wanted to have a local say as to what the school division can or would do to help our students become better students, of course, and of course learn at the same time.

And the community was actually split, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot of hard feelings in those early years because a lot of . . . The community being split, you'd see some families going to the regular school and you'd see other families going to the mission school. And you can see how families themselves were . . . their lines were very clearly drawn. And there was a lot of trouble in those early years, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot of trouble in the battle to control education.

And as a young man growing up in Ile-a-la-Crosse, you witnessed some of the issues. We attended a number of community, public meetings when I was a young guy still in school and we heard the debates from some of our leaders. And when I say that the community was split, Mr. Speaker, no question in my mind that there was a lot of hard feelings, and the community was evenly split over the notion of having a local school division and certainly having the control being exercised from outside of the community.

To make a long story short, those differences really did spill over to a number of violent incidents, Mr. Speaker, and people were really, really frustrated with the whole process. They were angry at each other. And at the end of the day, at the end of the storm, Mr. Speaker — and it was quite a storm — at the end of the storm, people gathered together and we decided to assert ourselves and to make sure that local people's voice to the school board would never, ever be silenced. And that was when they created the Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division, Mr. Speaker, and that certainly helped in many ways to calm the disturbance and to certainly calm a lot of the hard feelings that had resulted from a number of months in which the community was divided.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can point out that there were sit-ins. There were demonstrations. There were high-level meetings. There was actual violence, you know, within the community. And I tell you again that families were split and the community was split in many ways, Mr. Speaker. A lot of frustration.

So there's a lot of history to why you have the Creighton School Division, a lot of history as to why you have the Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division, and a lot of history to why you have the Northern Lights School Division. And of course now La Loche is looking at various options in which they themselves can play a bigger and more crucial role on how the school is administered, and certainly how they would participate in the decision-making process as it affects the lives of the school going to Dene High or Ducharme Elementary School in La Loche.

So as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the history in the North of how these school divisions have matured, how they have developed, and some of the challenges that continue to haunt many a school division. And under-resourcing some of these school boards is one of the biggest challenges, as we all know, and we continue to struggle with that particular challenge on a daily basis.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, if you look at all the incorporated histories of all the regions of our North, there were a lot of struggles to make sure we accomplished one major objective, and that was to have as many local voices engaged when it came to the decision-making process that affects the schools and affects the students attending those schools. So I would point out that there is a lot of compelling arguments around how we can strengthen the education system by making sure that local boards were elected, that there was a place for local voices, and that really helped stop a lot of the challenges in that region at the time.

Mr. Speaker, we've also, over time, I've heard some of the compelling arguments around the importance of Aboriginal engagement. We often sit back and notice that there are many stats coming our way. You know, as MLAs we get subjected to a lot of information, and we see that there are some challenging times to try and bring up the successful graduation rates of the First Nations and the Métis people. So we look at the role of the Aboriginal boards of education, and we begin to ascertain that they're also an important player in how we educate our young people, which includes Aboriginal people overall.

[15:15]

So to make that point, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions, as you look at the growing and the historical trend, we need to have more voices in education, more voices from the various backgrounds of the people of Saskatchewan. And most recently a number of documents, a number of reports suggest that increasing Aboriginal participation, especially if it comes to Aboriginal students, is essential to have any kind of success as it pertains to the educational system of the province of Saskatchewan.

So overall I think, Mr. Speaker, that we have to make sure that these issues and points are raised continually at the provincial level, and that every opportunity to explain that to the Saskatchewan Party government was undertaken by every board member. And many, many people participated in those hearings and certainly participated in presenting briefings as to how they could increase the amount of participation and success rate of certain sectors of the people and, certainly in my case, the Aboriginal community.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, after all the discussions, after all the presentations, after all the heartfelt and very touching and warm stories of how local voices are needed when it comes to administration of education throughout our province, Mr. Speaker, and the history of how some of these school boards were established, not just in the North but from all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and then the government comes along and they say to the people of Saskatchewan that they're not going to bother with changing any of the school divisions' boundaries; we're going to leave the school boards alone. And certainly a lot of people were quite pleased that that was the initial response.

And, Mr. Speaker, a few days later we find out that many of the powers and responsibility and the traditional roles of these school boards are going to be curtailed immensely and scaled back tremendously, Mr. Speaker, by an Act that the government's bringing forward. And this is the same Act that

the Minister of Education has brought forward.

So we on this side of the Assembly, we're very, very disappointed. We're disappointed that the many school divisions' voices were not heard and that many presentations by very knowledgeable people were ignored, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that the current Saskatchewan Party played with people's emotions, Mr. Speaker, on this particular issue. And then they'd turn around and say we're not going to touch the school division boundaries, but they put this big Act all over the school divisions as a way to control what decision making is available to the local boards prior to this Act being brought forward.

So the questions that the school divisions are asking: why is it so important for the minister to have all this authority? What is the purpose behind the minister having all of this authority? What is the whole role of the school divisions as you move on forward from this particular bill? And these are all the questions they have. They have many, many, many more questions than the government can answer, Mr. Speaker.

But as I indicated, every single paragraph, every single page has the phrase, the minister may, by order, do this, or the minister, by order, may do that. And it's an amazing display of authority that the minister has afforded upon himself, Mr. Speaker. And when we talked about the amount of pages that are in this particular bill, they have 178 pages of changes to the Act, 178 pages of areas that they have repealed, have taken completely out of the Act. And all the wording and all the changes and all the new rules and regulations are all about dispelling and disempowering the school divisions throughout our province. So at the end of the day, as opposition, we're saying, well they left the school divisions alone, but they've neutered all the school divisions with all these changes under Bill No. 63. So what is the purpose of that?

And I can tell you right now a lot of school divisions are extremely frustrated. They're quite angry, Mr. Speaker, that they have put this bill forward. And here we go again, playing with the emotions of the people of Saskatchewan, saying one thing and doing exactly opposite through the committee process into some of these Acts, Mr. Speaker. And that's the reason why I think the people of Saskatchewan are just tired. They simply have had enough of the Sask Party government, and it's time that we get rid of them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important is that, as I talked to a few school board members, a lot of them feel very discouraged. They are very discouraged, and they sit back and they say, all the submissions that we made, all the submissions that we made, all the arguments that we made fell on deaf ears. And all the government did and all the Sask Party government did, Mr. Speaker, all they did was simply say, we're not going to touch the school divisions. And they turn around and they disempower in every way, shape, or form the authority and the participation and the input of local people as they have done traditionally in providing some valuable advice and insight to try and ensure that the communities in their area and the children that they serve are given a good quality education. And, Mr. Speaker, they were very, very disappointed.

Now I would say to the current government that perhaps if they would have, Mr. Speaker, if they would have had provided

more oversight to projects like the Regina bypass where we're exceeding \$2 billion, if they would have conferred the same powers to the Minister of Highways they have conferred to the Minister of Education on this bill, then I don't think we'd be in the boondoggle that we are as it refers to the bypass, Mr. Speaker.

And as well, if they would have had oversight, as much oversight as the Minister of Education wants over education, if they would have had oversight over the carbon capture storage project that cost \$1.5 billion, perhaps we wouldn't be in this predicament, Mr. Speaker. So why is it that certain projects, big projects don't have the oversight, but the Minister of Education insists on controlling every bit of every education decision in the province of Saskatchewan? What is that about? What is all that about? People of Saskatchewan really want to know. Why does the minister want to have all this power and authority? What is up with that, Mr. Speaker?

And that's one of the fundamental questions that many board members throughout the province have asked. And, Mr. Speaker, school divisions right across the province are angry. They are angry in every corner of the province, in every constituency, and they want answers. Why go through the motion of saying we're not going to touch the school divisions' boundaries, and yet they turn around and you put this Act in place to curtail and to neuter any decision making at the local level?

And I think that's a real shame for the Saskatchewan Party to do that to the people that have dedicated their lives to making sure that they're able to improve the quality of education to their children and grandchildren and the people in their particular community that they serve. And it's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that they're doing this.

So the question we would ask in the opposition and as we go through this particular bill: why do that? Why go through those motions of listening to the public? Why did they negotiate with SSBA and with the teachers and engage as many community groups as they possibly could? And then come the budget time, they say to people, we're not touching the school boards' authority. And, Mr. Speaker, the bill comes along, and they are really hampering the whole process of decision making.

Now our school boards throughout the province of Saskatchewan are neutered thanks to the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker, and more particularly, thanks to the Minister of Education, whom I believe also served as the chairman of the Saskatoon Public School Board association, Mr. Speaker. And it's going to be very interesting as we dig up some old comments and lines and statements that he may have made as a trustee. So what changed between his role as a trustee prior to 1995 and now today, Mr. Speaker? What has changed for him?

And all we can say to the people of Saskatchewan, it's all about a power grab for them, Mr. Speaker. And the people of Saskatchewan did not vote for that. The people of Saskatchewan did not expect that, and the people of Saskatchewan did not know that this was going to happen under the Sask Party government.

So we have a lot of questions as it pertains to this particular bill. We are going through section after section to make sure that we are able to articulate to the many school divisions that are out there that this is what's being planned by the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker, and that there's 178 pages of changes to the authority of the school divisions, 178 pages that give the Minister of Education absolute authority over every decision that the school board makes.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that that's a crying shame for that to occur because the people of Saskatchewan have always maintained that local voices are pretty important, that local voices are pretty darn important, that they be maintained so they're able to afford the school and its services to our young people, to afford them local insight in how we can make sure that everyone has access to quality education. So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of issues around Bill No. 63. We're going to have . . .

The Minister spoke very briefly about it, and you'll notice even to explain the bill itself, the minister was very brief because what the minister doesn't want to talk about in the bill is how he has conferred this great authority and great power upon himself. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a crying shame because that's not what the Saskatchewan people thought they voted for. I think they got their rude awakening around this particular bill. And we would ask them to join us, to join us in speaking out against the particular bill and demanding that local voices not be silenced and that the rules and regulations around who has the final authority over their child's educational opportunity must have a local component to it.

It just can't be the minister himself. There's got to be other people that have participated in that process, and this bill does a great amount of injustice to that particular effort by the local people to participate.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of issues on this particular bill. We're going to have other members of our opposition speak out against this bill. I'm sure you're going to have other organizations that will come out publicly and speak out against this bill. But the fundamental question that they ask: why did the minister afford himself so much authority over the school divisions under this particular Act where he has neutered school divisions? And yet he's gone through all the countless hours of discussion with these school divisions only to confer more authority and more power onto himself. Why, Mr. Speaker? What was the purpose? Why would he do that? That's the fundamental question that many school divisions have as it pertains to this Act and that minister, Mr. Speaker.

So on that note, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 64 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading for *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017*.

Saskatchewan has had a \$1.2 billion revenue shortfall as we start 2017-18. To address this shortfall and bring the province back to a balanced budget, this government has made some very difficult decisions. We must change our way of thinking and move away from our dependence on resource revenues, a revenue source that has proven to be tumultuous and unreliable. Our resources are a great source of pride here in this province and at times have been very profitable for us. And there are times, such as we are experiencing now, where the market has not been profitable and is not treating us kindly.

It's time that we build our financial picture on a foundation that is more consistent and reliable. Our 2017 budget has put us on the path to doing just that. In the meantime we have a big hole to fill. It is for this reason that we made the decision to cancel the grants-in-lieu paid to municipalities by SaskPower and SaskEnergy. This program has been in place since the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, and is not based on property tax assessments but rather consumption of electricity or gas. There are 109 cities and municipalities in Saskatchewan impacted by this decision. A total of 32 million will be redirected to the General Revenue Fund from SaskPower and SaskEnergy to help us meet our goal of balancing the provincial budget by 2019-20.

This amendment will provide the authority for SaskPower and SaskEnergy to redirect to the General Revenue Fund those amounts currently paid to municipalities as grants or payments in lieu of taxes. The amending legislation was necessary to provide the government the option of redirecting the revenues to the General Revenue Fund and also to clarify potential legal situations that may have been raised by those impacted communities.

I want to be clear today, Mr. Speaker, that we have not turned a blind eye to the cities and municipalities in Saskatchewan. The 29 million in grants-in-lieu based on estimated property tax on provincially owned assets are still being paid to the municipalities by other Crowns and government ministries. SaskPower also collects a municipal surcharge on power bills which results in another 74 million for municipalities.

[15:30]

Municipalities will also receive 257 million in municipal revenue sharing this year, more than double the amount that they received in revenue sharing a decade ago. That is significantly more than the 95 million that they received under the previous government. As well, the government is providing nine cities with a cap on the grants-in-lieu reduction to ensure that no municipality sees a loss of more than 30 per cent of the revenue-sharing amount. Those cities include Estevan, Humboldt, Melfort, Melville, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Weyburn, and Yorkton. I should also note that

although these are called grants-in-lieu of taxes, they are actually based on a flat percentage of utility sales within a municipality and are unrelated to the value of property.

This patchwork of funding and the unfairness of it all is one of the reasons why we want to revamp the various streams of funding municipalities receive from the province, and we will be discussing that issue with SUMA and SARM.

This government has also provided 134.2 million in support to municipal infrastructure projects. Despite a very challenging fiscal situation, we have been able to increase the investment by 60 per cent over the last year. The change does not affect the grants-in-lieu paid by Crowns or government for provincial property tax based on assessment times mill rate. Thus government is still paying its share respecting municipal services that support these properties.

Also it does not affect SaskPower's collection of a municipal surcharge on electricity which will provide an estimated 74 million to the municipalities that receive it. This legislation is just one part of the solution for this province and will ensure that the government has the means needed to continue towards balancing the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Government Relations has moved that Bill No. 64, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to provide some initial comments in response to the minister's second reading speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Certainly this bill was a bit of a surprise I think for pretty much everyone in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was looking through the promises that were made in the last Sask Party platform and I couldn't find any reference to this anywhere in that platform, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly we know the Premier keeps referring to the fact that he gave SUMA ample warning by telling them that everything was on the table, including grants-in-lieu, Mr. Speaker.

But clearly that was not something that SUMA interpreted, to read what we see in this bill here today and what this government is doing to urban municipalities in a way that was definitely not discussed in the platform. And I think the people of the province, if they had known this was coming, back when they voted, some different decisions may have been made, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I think the most important thing to do when we talk about this bill . . . Well we could take a quick look at it. And it's not a long bill, but we have to sort through some of the code language that the ministry uses and say, what does that really mean? I think one of the big concerns we see in this bill, and in other bills that the government is bringing forward, she said just now

that the idea was to clarify potential legal situations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at clause 6, and I believe that's the clause the minister is referring to. Here's what this clause says, and we should read this into the record and maybe decipher a little bit exactly what the minister's talking about here. So clause no. 6 reads as follows:

No action or proceeding based on any claim for loss or damage as a result of the enactment or application of this Act lies or shall be commenced against:

- (a) the Crown in right of Saskatchewan;
- (b) a member or former member of the Executive Council;
- (c) Saskatchewan Power Corporation;
- (d) SaskEnergy Incorporated;
- (e) TransGas Limited; or
- (f) any officer, director, employee or agent or former officer, director, employee or agent of the Crown or of the corporations mentioned in clauses (c) to (e).

And then the second subclause reads:

Every claim for loss or damage resulting from the enactment or application of this Act is extinguished.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the way I'm reading this, this goes a whole lot further than clarifying potential legal situations, as the minister said. This section shuts down the ability of any municipal corporation or organization to bring any kind of lawsuit against anyone in the government.

So this is a huge bat, Mr. Speaker, that this government is employing. And we know that SUMA is exploring legal options to deal with the impact of what's happening here. And we have a government that says, well they can't sue us because we have this big majority and we're just not going to let them sue us. We're going to pass a law that won't let them sue us. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is really concerning when we see the might of a government like this bearing down on the municipal organizations that have been trying to support this government through the years. So I think, you know, SUMA's beginning to realize the total impact now that we've actually seen the bill itself. We weren't too sure on budget day exactly what all this meant, but we see now where this government is headed.

Mr. Speaker, the city of Yorkton signed a contract with SaskPower Corporation. Now normally when you sign a contract and you put your signature on it, the common man would understand that that means you will honour your word, and when your signature's on a contract, you will honour that contract, Mr. Speaker. That is the decency of the legal system we have here before us in Canada right now, is that when you put your name on a contract, you don't expect that the other person's going to renege. Well the city of Yorkton signed a contract with SaskPower back in 1959, Mr. Speaker, and in those days we know that local communities had their own

power corporations. I know in my hometown of Lafleche there was an old diesel power plant. That's how people got their power was locally, through the local municipalities that would provide power to people.

When SaskPower was formed as a provincial Crown, they recognized the ability of communities to be able to raise funds that way and have a business. It was a legitimate business enterprise that communities were undertaking. They were making money off of these power plants. Well they said, okay, on our word, we will tell you that we will be able to . . . We will take over your business opportunity to sell power to your citizens, but we'll reflect that in a contract where we will make payments to you in lieu of the profits you would have made. We will honour that because SaskPower got a huge advantage by being able to take over these power plants. The same goes for transportation and distribution of natural gas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, originally natural gas was distributed under the SaskPower Act, and then when SaskEnergy was created as a separate Crown, those responsibilities then moved over to SaskEnergy.

So the city of Yorkton put their signature on that contract. I've read the contract. There's no expiry date. This is seen as an ongoing obligation based on, I guess, the opportunity that SaskPower is afforded by being able to provide power to the citizens of Yorkton.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon I pay my power bill to the city of Saskatoon because in my case, certain parts of the city of Saskatoon, they still sell power to their citizens. And that's just an anomaly, a historical situation that came about and still exists in the city of Saskatoon. Many people in Saskatoon pay their power directly to SaskPower, but that's outside . . . I live in an older part of the city, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So when you see a Crown corporation signing this document, putting its name on it, I think the municipalities assume that their word is good for it unless there's interference by a massive government majority that decides that no longer can municipalities count on the word of the Crown corporations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this has really been a severe hit, as we know, for the municipalities as the information comes forward, as we begin to understand what exactly the government and the Sask Party are going after here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had meetings last week with people from the city of Moose Jaw, for example. And in the discussion about this particular move on the part of the Sask Party government, it became clear that the whole municipal revenue-sharing formula was predicated on the knowledge and the existence of these types of agreements which form part of the negotiations, Mr. Speaker.

So there was not sort of a one-day negotiation where the Sask Party signed an agreement for municipal revenue sharing. Certainly that was something that took many, many years. And what it did do is reflect the offloading of responsibilities onto municipal governments, particularly in this case, urban municipal governments. So there was an offloading onto urban municipal governments and a corresponding recognition through revenue sharing that they would take on those obligations, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well these agreements with the Power Corporation and with SaskEnergy formed part of those negotiations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And now we see a government yanking that out without any forewarning or any possible planning on the part of the urban municipalities. Now you see the press releases that are coming out from SUMA, and the language is changing quite a bit since March 22nd, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There was an immediate release on budget day that said that SUMA was relieved that the municipal sharing was maintained, but they are disappointed by continued downloading. So that was the first press release that we saw from SUMA on March 22nd.

Then we move forward to March 28th. SUMA started realizing what was happening here, and the impact on the fact . . . they realized budget day how devastating this cut would be to them. So the next headline on their next press release, which was only six days later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: "Provincial government punishing hometowns." "SUMA calls on province to reverse cuts to municipal funding." And I'll just share you the first paragraph:

Saskatchewan hometowns are reeling this week as the reality of the provincial budget continues to sink in. The 2017 provincial budget stripped \$36 million of payments in lieu from Saskatchewan's urban municipalities — a move that the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association is calling on the provincial government to reverse.

So I think they were still hopeful, even a week later, that perhaps this government would hear them and would listen to their concerns, recognizing the severe and drastic impact that this bill was going to have on these people. They used language like, the president of SUMA, Gordon Barnhart, said, "We expected last week's provincial budget to be tough, but nothing prepared us for the crisis some of our members now face." He went on to say, "This shortsighted decision has left many hometowns facing a dire financial situation."

And this government says, well they just need to deal with it. That's sort of the response we get from this government. They're not even willing to sit down and talk with municipalities and give them the time they need to react. The Premier's saying, well use your reserve funds. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know that municipal governments are required to balance their budget, and that they need those reserve funds for those infrastructure issues. That's what they're set aside for. It's not for operational funds. It's for when those infrastructure situations arise and those funds are needed.

So I think it's rich that the Premier can tell these governments to use up their funds, their reserve funds, when this government blew through the best years that this province has ever seen in terms of resource revenues and never saved a single darn penny, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Like what kind of gall does the government have to suggest to RMs [rural municipality] to use up their reserve funds that they very carefully planned for, and this government couldn't save a single nickel? Like how does that work, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's completely unacceptable.

Let's fast-forward now to April 10th, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is today. SUMA has spoken out once again, and this time they have called . . . The headline in this release is this: "SUMA Calls for *Meaningful* Consultation as Hometowns Reopen

Budgets." And I'll just read you a little bit out of this press release, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Executive Committee from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association showcased a united front today, as they continued to push the provincial government to engage in meaningful consultation while the province's more than 440 hometowns left reeling by the significant cuts and downloading delivered in the provincial budget.

. . . In addition to stripping \$36 million of payments in lieu from 109 hometowns, the provincial budget shuttered the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, suspended the Community Rink Affordability Grant, further reduced funding to urban parks, suspended the Main Street Saskatchewan Program, further cut funding to the Urban Highway Connector Program — which also funds the Town Urban Highway Program — and slashed funding to libraries.

Then we have a quote:

"We were hopeful the meeting with four cabinet ministers on March 29 was a first step in meaningful consultation and further discussion with the provincial government," said SUMA Vice-President of Villages, Resort Villages and Northern Municipalities Mike Strachan. "But less than two days later, before we could bring forward any suggestions, Minister Harpauer issued a press release. The decision to cap the payments in lieu cuts — but only for nine out of 109 hometowns and only at 30 per cent of their revenue sharing amount — came out of nowhere for us."

[15:45]

And they actually compared it to when the provincial Environment minister was in Montreal meeting with his counterparts to discuss a Canadian-made solution of climate change and saying that, you know, they were upset because the federal government was unilateral. Well this is what SUMA's feeling right now, Mr. Speaker. They're feeling the same way as the Minister of the Environment was then, when they say, we thought we were partners in building Saskatchewan.

They go on to say:

To add insult to injury, within a week [within a week] of agreeing to work with and listen to Saskatchewan's hometowns to find a better solution, the government introduced Bill 64 . . . [That's this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker]. The bill would cancel all municipal services agreements — payments in lieu — and take away municipalities' right to legal action against the government or the Crowns in question.

And what do they say about this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I'm not making this up. This is SUMA that is speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker. SUMA said:

Introducing this bill was a clear sign to hometowns that the provincial government is not interested in meaningful consultation with the order of government that spent the last decade on the frontlines of growth. We were doing our

fair share during the boom — providing critical services and creating the quality of life we all expect in Saskatchewan. We were paying, not profiting [Mr. Deputy Speaker].

So the article goes on, and I know other of my colleagues are going to want to take some opportunity to comment on that as well because I think it's just shocking and shameful that this government can just off-load the way it has on our urban municipalities.

Eighty per cent of Saskatchewan people live in urban municipalities. The brunt of the boom has been faced by many of these urban municipalities, Mr. Speaker. And when they say, you know, that they've been more than generous, Mr. Speaker, we know that urban municipalities have barely been able to keep up because of the off-loading that this government has foisted upon them.

So there's a real disconnect here, Mr. Speaker. Now I'm not sure if it's just from the arrogance of a large majority, or is it a government that's tired and doesn't want to listen to people anymore, to listen to his own municipal partners, Mr. Deputy Speaker? This is a shock when we hear them brag in the past about how great they were to urban municipal governments, and now we see them basically throwing them under the bus.

The other thing I think that's really interesting here is we know SaskPower is in a desperate financial situation right now. Its debt-to-equity ratio is over 75 per cent which is bordering on, you know, time to get really nervous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's a really high debt-to-equity ratio. Usually the safety limit is as high as 75 per cent. They're now over it.

So you would think if the government was going to say, well this municipal grants-in-lieu program isn't working, that somehow, well maybe we should give SaskTel and . . . or sorry, SaskPower and SaskEnergy the opportunity to retain those revenues within their own bottom line, Mr. Speaker. And of course it would show up in terms of the revenues to the Crowns.

Well that's not what the Minister of Finance told me the other night in committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We had a little discussion about these particular cuts to the municipalities and I said, well you know, is SaskPower going to now keep the money? Is that what's going to happen? Or I said, are the Crowns now required to pay this amount to the provincial GRF [General Revenue Fund]? And after some confusion . . . Actually the minister didn't even know the file at this point; he was corrected by his officials. But he said, no, this money isn't staying with SaskPower or SaskEnergy; it's actually going to the GRF.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last time I checked, I thought Crown Investments Corporation was responsible for getting dividends from the Crown corporations to provide to the GRF. So this is a complete end run on the Crown Investments Corporation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I don't understand what's going on. Why would this government do a complete end run on CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] and the way dividends have been handled for the last many decades, Mr. Speaker? So when I asked the minister, well why are you doing this, and why do you think that this money is going to the GRF,

and he said . . . I'm just going to find the quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's page 2 . . . Oh, I know it's in here somewhere. But the minister said basically, this money is going to help with programs, government programs.

So typically we would use dividends to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I know we're going to have a lot of questions for the minister when this bill goes to committee in terms of what the heck is going on. Are they getting rid of CIC? I mean that's a rumour that's going around, but is it really happening? Is the government now just taking over all the Crown dividends through a direct payment to the GRF? Because that's exactly what this bill does. If you look at section 3 for the SaskPower Corporation Act, they're saying . . . Here's how it reads:

In accordance with the regulations, the corporation shall, in each of its financial years, pay to the following the amount prescribed in the regulations based on its revenues from the supply of energy in the financial year:

- a) the Minister of Finance for deposit in the general revenue fund;
- b) municipalities designated in the regulations.

So we don't know. We don't know what this is going to look like because obviously we've got to see the regulations, which come long after the bill is passed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There will be no opportunity for comment in this House. There will be no opportunity for comment in the committees. And those regulations will just show up. Then we'll finally know what they're up to, and we'll maybe try and figure it out at that point in time.

But in the meantime, we have a government that's breaking contracts. Like what kind of message is that sending to anybody we do business with? We don't see them breaking contracts with Deveraux Homes when Deveraux Homes can't provide . . . Oh well they do, but it's to Deveraux Homes' advantage, in this case, a private company. We do see them breaking contracts with teachers. We have seen them break contracts, promises made to the universities and other government bodies when it came to the refund of the WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] payments.

I mean so maybe, maybe these guys are totally comfortable with breaking contracts right, left, and centre. They don't really care. They don't really care anymore, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we see with a massive majority like this, the complete disdain and the hubris that creeps in when you're just willing to break contracts because you don't feel like honouring them anymore. Is that how this works, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

We're better than that in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are better than that. And we need a government that reflects who we are as Saskatchewan people. We don't go back on our word. And yet we see them doing that right, left, and centre. And this bill is a classic example of not being able to count on the Sask Party government.

I really like that the minister describes as "clarify potential legal situations," when really what she's telling urban municipalities and SaskPower and SaskEnergy in this context: you can't sue

us. No matter what we do, you can't sue us. No legal actions can come out of this. And we know that SUMA needs that kind of leverage to be able to deal fairly with these guys, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You can't count on them, and now you can't sue them either. Even when they break contracts, you can't sue them. Isn't that a convenient way of dealing with your partners, building trust, building trust with the urban municipalities?

And I'm sure the member from Arm River would like to, you know, talk to his own municipal governments about this bill. And I'm wondering if he's having that conversation with his municipal leadership because we know that SUMA is not happy. And I would like him to share with us exactly what he is hearing about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this government is breaking their contracts. They're breaking their contracts and it's unacceptable, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, this minister is trying to tell us this is all apples to apples, that everything's fine. You know, move on. Don't worry. Everything's good. We are looking out for the best interests of these people and, you know, don't worry about it. Well I think what we have to do is count on our municipal leadership in this case, and our municipal leadership is clearly telling us that this is not apples to apples. This is apples to oranges, that this is the breaking of the word of a government that has no regard for its own contracts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know others of my colleagues will want to speak about this as well.

I also found it rich that the minister tried to explain to us again why they're clawing this money back from municipalities and why they're putting it in their GRF, you know, and this, they've learned their lesson about, you know, we need to stop our dependence on resource revenues. Mr. Speaker, where the heck were they in 2007 and 2008 when they should have been putting that money away? Resource revenues weren't volatile when oil was at \$140 a barrel? Like come on, Mr. Speaker. Anyone could have realized that that was a sign of volatility and that you don't expect oil to stay at \$140 a barrel forever.

But no, they only see the light after they spent it all. Plus they didn't only just spend that, they also spent all the money that they had received in the rainy day fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So on top of blowing everything they got, they also blew any resources they had. And then all of a sudden in 2017 they go, oh gee, I guess resource revenues are volatile.

Like that is so disrespectful to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is disrespectful to the people of Saskatchewan to suggest that they only now realize that resource revenues were volatile. Well hello, Mr. Speaker. They should have known better, and they're putting the people of Saskatchewan in a terrible situation because of their mismanagement, their scandal, and their waste.

So I know other of my colleagues are going to have more to say about this bill. At this point, I would like to move that we adjourn the debate on Bill No. 64, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 64. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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 Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise to enter into debate on Bill 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*. Being the member for Regina Lakeview, Mr. Deputy Speaker, any time we talk about Wascana Centre, it gets the attention of people in my constituency for sure. This is an iconic park within the centre and really is the jewel in the Queen City's crown, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is something that is not only deeply valued and kept with great interest of people in Regina Lakeview, but really all across the city and across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is an iconic place, that when people think of Saskatchewan, they think of wheat fields. They think of boreal forests. And they think of this park with the big dome that used to be sort of a dark colour; these days it's copper clad. But this is what they think of when they think of Saskatchewan, this centre that really is in some ways a built testament and tells the story of this place and people here, a gathering place for many years pre-contact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and a gathering place for many years.

Since 1905, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen this park go from a barren place, a pasture without trees to what it is today, and that is a complex and beautiful space that really remains a gathering space.

The trees, if you see pictures of this place back at the time that the province was . . . Back in 1905 when our province came into being, there wasn't a tree to be seen, and now it is the largest urban park in North America, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that really is a testament to the vision and the maintenance and hard work of many people. And it is not something to be entered into lightly when we talk about how we protect and how we govern, how we invest in and we maintain this beautiful park.

What is being proposed here with this bill really does fundamentally change how the centre has been administered since the '60s, 1962, when *The Wascana Centre Act* first came into force, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At that time it was decided that this park should not ever be under the governance of or at the will of any governing political party or government.

This is a park that should be held in the interests of all people in Saskatchewan, and so at that time it was decided that the

makeup of the board would be five members as appointed by government, and then three appointed by the University of Regina, and three from the city of Regina, so the non-government votes being the majority on that board, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[16:00]

What is proposed with this legislation is repealing that Act and replacing it with this new Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And again I've spoken about the need to look at any proposed changes in the context of what's going on and in a broader context. I'm just going to look to some of the remarks in both the news release and the minister's second reading comments about the reasons for this change, which really is a fundamental change with regard to Wascana Centre Authority and how the park is governed.

So this news release, going back to March 22nd, announcing the changes here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, acknowledges:

"We know how passionate Saskatchewan citizens are about the park and how deeply they care it remains as an outdoor oasis for families and visitors."

The province will continue to update and adhere to the Master Plan . . .

But it talks about the need to streamline governance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's one of those words that I've learned in my short time here to pay attention to and be a little bit nervous about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about streamlining things. It often, in my experience to this point, streamline often comes with finding — another word that is used — finding efficiencies, which I've taken to mean often cuts. And streamlining governance often means more control in the hands of government. And I certainly see that here with this proposed legislation.

I'm going to go right to the second reading comments from the minister. "Once passed, this legislation will move responsibility for the Wascana Centre and all of its assets to the Provincial Capital Commission . . ." Again it talks about efficiencies being found. And of course we should always look for efficiencies, but I hope that that doesn't mean a cut to services within the park. And certainly the track record on, you know, finding those efficiencies — I think of within education or within health care — that that has been a bit of a synonym for cuts and underfunding I'm afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I hope that that's not what is being proposed here.

It also talks, as I said, about new streamlined governance board composition, Mr. Speaker. Streamlined board composition, I suppose, might refer to having decisions made more quickly. But I'm not sure that . . . But that is always in the long-term interests of, certainly of something like our Wascana Centre. I think it is good that you have the input, as you see now, from a number of bodies — again the majority of those on the board. And with those, the power of the vote would be those not appointed by the government, the three from the city of Regina and the three from the University of Regina, who certainly are big stakeholders in Wascana Centre.

This would . . . I mean there are some concerns. And I should, I'm going to refer to a news article from Global dated March the 31st. At that time, Ward 2 city councillor, Bob Hawkins, had some concerns that he noted about the process with regard to this legislation, this proposed bill, Mr. Speaker, that "This was done without consultation and suddenly in the provincial budget document . . . [and without] approach to consultations with the city whatsoever."

And certainly that's a story that we're becoming very familiar with, Mr. Speaker. Major changes made to the authority of other bodies like the Wascana Centre Authority, the school boards, the municipalities, without consultation and coming as really sort of a, quite a surprise, and I think that that's what's being expressed in this article.

One of the interesting things about the preamble and the reasoning provided for presenting this bill was that it points back to a report that was undertaken in 2012, Mr. Speaker, so that's a bit of a lag. We're looking at five years on, and all of a sudden this became a priority this year. So that makes me a bit curious about what the reasons are for that, Mr. Speaker, why this report was basically shelved for five years and now it's come to the light of day at a time when we have some controversy in the park about development.

And so I'm very curious about that, and I think that that needs to be scrutinized in committee and that the people who will be impacted — and that really is the people of Saskatchewan — what their views are and what their potential concerns are before this decision is taken out of their hands essentially and put under the purview of the provincial government who would have a majority share of board members once this legislation is passed.

Another theme that we've seen with this budget, you know, taking over power, pointing to assets and reserves held by others, as we find this government in really a difficult financial position having spent all of their own reserves and now looking under the couch cushions or beating the bushes, as it were, within Wascana Park for any other potential assets. So I think that that really has to be looked at in terms of why this change and why now, Mr. Speaker.

There are some assurances that the master plan, the Wascana Centre master plan, would be continued to be followed and would continue to govern the park, which I think is good news, Mr. Speaker. This is a very hefty document. It takes some long-term planning and really is a good approach, I would think, to any time that you are charged with overseeing something as important as Wascana Centre, that you would take a long-term view of it.

And I would hope that that would continue and we wouldn't look at making any short-term decisions ahead of a budget crisis or a downturn in oil or, you know, a grab to sell off valuable real estate or anything like that, Mr. Speaker, because that really would contravene what most people believe is the purpose of the park. And that is a public space, a non-commercial space for the most part, Mr. Speaker, a space that is an ecological preserve that affords people from around the city and really around the province with a safe and accessible recreational outlet. You know, there's the Devonian

path. You see canoers and kayakers on the lake, families out picnicking.

And really another theme in this budget has sort of been a retreat of the commons, you know, a commercialization and a privatization of those common spaces. And I'm afraid that the potential is for that here with this bill as well, were it to be passed. You know, these are spaces that we hold collectively, that are here for the benefit of all people in this province regardless of, you know, their ability to pay or regardless of a lot of factors that prohibit them from occupying other spaces in our province, Mr. Speaker. And it really is a shame to see such a retreat of these public spaces, because I think that, well it's part of the character of who we are in this province, Mr. Speaker. And I think it really ought to be quite carefully scrutinized with regard to the intent of this bill and why now.

I know that there are a lot of people, some with differing views, even within my own constituency, about the project, the revitalization of the old campus, and certainly some strongly held views about any further commercialization of the park or any retreat of . . . increase of the office space footprint within the park. And I think that those voices ought to be listened to. And I know that there are others of my caucus who would like to speak to this, Mr. Speaker. But I think that I will give them the opportunity to it another time. And with that I think I will conclude my remarks and move to adjourn.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Lakeview has adjourned 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 Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 61

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 61 — *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's an honour to be able to rise in the House and address some of the bills that this government is bringing forward.

This is an interesting bill. When you talk about the idea of commercial innovation, certainly it's not a new concept. And I know the minister has said that it's the first in Canada, but as far as I understand, Quebec introduced one that was effective January 1st, 2017. So really, I believe it is the second one in Canada.

We know that people who are interested in intellectual property certainly would like to see more of these types of income tax . . . They call it a patent box because it's the box you would check off on your income tax return. They call it innovation box

or patent box, and it's just an idea that it's a special tax credit for companies that can demonstrate a number of things to prove that they are introducing a new, innovative, intellectual property-based ideas. And in most cases, if you read any of the literature around it, it's to support small to medium-sized businesses in terms of bringing in innovation and new ideas.

Now I guess, you know, in theory, this is something that people have been calling for. Certainly people are calling for it on a national level. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether this minister has actually pushed the previous government or this government federally to bring this in on a national level because I think that's where I think the true benefit seems to lie.

But I'll just read a little bit from . . . This is a legal, an article from a law firm called Hull and Hull LLP. And this is what they describe these patent boxes as. So I'll just read from here:

A Canadian "patent box" system could boost innovation in the country, says Toronto patent lawyer Aaron Edgar.

Patent boxes, sometimes known as "innovation boxes" or "IP boxes," provide special lower tax rates on income related to businesses' intellectual property, with the aim of incentivizing the commercialization of research inside the country.

They get their name from the extra checkbox added to tax returns in countries that have adopted the reduced rate to delineate eligible revenue from companies' regular income.

The Irish government pioneered the patent box in the 1970s, but the idea failed to catch on elsewhere until the dawn of the 21st Century. In recent years, a number of nations have jumped on the innovation box bandwagon by enacting their own versions. They include China, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Spain and Switzerland.

And now the clamour is growing for Canada to catch up, with several groups pushing for the federal government to develop its own scheme.

I'll go on a little bit further in the article. They say:

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is among those calling for a patent box to make sure Canada remains competitive with other developing countries, predicting that the resulting boost in economic activity would easily cover the costs of offering the tax break.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've seen this movie before in Saskatchewan, and it's something called the film employment tax credit. And when you look at the aims and goals of this particular idea coming from this government in relation to innovation with small to medium-sized businesses, it's the exact same rationale that was behind the film employment tax credit that was very suddenly cut by this government a few years ago. And I recall the Premier telling us that he really didn't like the idea of refundable tax credits. He didn't like the idea of it at all. And yet in this budget we see a new refundable tax credit being brought in for research and development, for example. And then

we see this kind of tax break for companies that will bring in employees due to the innovation, the idea that they're patenting, Mr. Speaker.

So okay, that's what they're doing here. But why the logic of removing the film employment tax credit which employed people in Saskatchewan? It was a boost for the local economies. It was a boost for many numbers of small to medium-sized businesses here in the province. And I just don't get why this government would say, we don't like refundable tax credits; now we like refundable tax credits. And you know, it's kind of like saying, you know, we don't want municipalities to succeed; we're going to cut their funding. I mean, there's so many inconsistencies. But what we see, Mr. Speaker, was the minister referred to this as keeping one of their promises in the last election in their platform.

[16:15]

Now I just want to look at some of the other promises that were made in that platform, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at page 30 of the Saskatchewan Party platform document 2016, and in there they talk about new platform commitments. And they say, they talk about platform items. And there's six items in there, and they've already axed three of them, Mr. Speaker. So, so far, of the six promises they made on page 30, they've already cancelled three. So it's funny how this minister's talking about upholding their promises in their platform, and yet we see them walking away from them on a regular basis as we move along.

For example, the graduate retention first home option was introduced last year, and all of a sudden, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the three years . . . They said in their platform they would give 1.8 million this year, in '17-18; 2.7 million in '18-19; an additional 3.6 million in '19-20. This is what they campaigned on. This is what they promised the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But guess what? This is a broken promise. They can't keep their promises except for, of course, the one that the minister was talking about in this bill.

But let's look at another one. The seniors' education property tax deferral was supposed to be \$3.5 million this year, \$3.5 million next year, \$3.5 million in '19-20. Do we see that anywhere in the budget this year? I don't think so, Mr. . . . Maybe somebody could point it out to me. I may have missed it but, as far as I know, that that promise has also been broken by this government.

Oh, and here's another one, individualized funding for children with ASD, autism spectrum disorder. They promised in 2017-18 they would provide \$2.8 million for those families who are struggling with those issues. They promised those families, Mr. Speaker. They made a promise, and now they've broken it. They're deferring it. They're not able to meet their commitments.

So what the heck were people voting on, Mr. Speaker, when we see these kinds of broken promises in this platform? I mean, again, we see them breaking contracts with teachers, threatening to break employment contracts with our public servants. So again, I think when you're as mired in your magnificent majority, Mr. Speaker, as these folks are, they lose sight of what they actually promised the people.

You know, and I think another thing we need to look at is, did we see a promise for an increase in the education property tax? No. How about reducing municipal revenue sharing through the cuts we see in the grants-in-lieu? No, I don't think we saw that. Did we see Meewasin Valley Authority statutory funding being removed in the platform? I didn't see it. My colleague hasn't seen that. Maybe we need new glasses or something. I'm not sure.

Did we see a 5 per cent reduction to operational funding for Advanced Education? I don't recall seeing that in the platform anywhere. How about ending the provincial pastures program? I don't recall the Minister of Agriculture speaking about that during the platform last year. Oh yes, school division operating funding cut by \$22 million. I missed that somewhere in the platform.

A \$3.5 million reduction to operating funding for libraries, now you'd think I would have seen that in the platform if it was there, but that's a pretty important thing that . . . I guess maybe there might have been a few pages missing from their platform, Mr. Speaker, and they just didn't bother telling the people of Saskatchewan what it was they were intending to do.

Did small businesses know that they were going to lose their commissions when they collect taxes for this government? Did they know that they were going to have to do it for free on their own time without any compensation from this government? I don't think that was in there.

In fact I don't recall NORTEP [northern teacher education program] being mentioned at all in the platform, you know. So it's kind of funny, it's just a year ago that we were actually going to the people for voting. Did we hear any sign that there was going to be a \$1.3 billion deficit this year alone or the previous calendar year or fiscal year, Mr. Speaker?

And you know, I seem to recall the idea here was . . . Oh yes, on page 31 of their platform, this is what they did say, "The current four-year financial outlook projects a deficit of \$259 million in '16-17." So \$259 million to 1.3 and counting — billion, 1.3 billion and counting — is a significant change from what this government promised to the people of Saskatchewan.

Oh, but what else did they say? "The budget becomes balanced with a small surplus in 2017-18." This is what they promised the people of Saskatchewan. A balanced budget in 2017-18, maybe a small surplus. Well that sounds really good, Mr. Speaker, sounds great. But you know what? It wasn't there. It never was there. And they had no way to even get there. Now we're looking at over \$650 million deficit when we had them say in their platform the budget becomes balanced with a small surplus in 2017-18.

So I'm just really confused by what isn't in this platform, and then everything that's in there that they've already either broken promises or were clearly unable to make those commitments work, Mr. Speaker. So I mean when we look at this idea of a patent box, I mean it's one that is catching on. I guess what happens though is that every province has one, then what's the advantage for Saskatchewan?

We see Quebec is already doing it. We know other provinces

are looking at it. We may be second out of the box — literally — this time around, Mr. Speaker, but we know that this is something that many provinces are looking at, and obviously the Canadian government is as well. So they might be a little bit ahead of the game here right now, but you know, when you're talking about helping out small and medium-sized businesses, how about taking away the exemption on children's clothing? This comes out of the pockets of small- and medium-sized-business owners, Mr. Speaker.

How about hearing aids and eliminating hearing aid plans for people? How about reducing \$13 million in the labour market development? How is that helping small to medium-sized businesses? Well of course the elimination of the commission, that's \$9 million out of businesses' pockets, Mr. Speaker. PST [provincial sales tax] on restaurants, PST on construction, how is that helping small to medium-sized businesses, Mr. Speaker? And yet this is the justification for introducing this patent box.

This patent box, Mr. Speaker, is for a very, very small group of people. And unfortunately we don't know exactly what it's going to look like, and that's part of the problem with this bill.

One of the things they talk about is the ideas that will be subject to this tax. The corporate income tax is only going to be 6 per cent for these new ideas. The definition they need to meet, a scientific test, says it has to be an exceptional innovation. But, Mr. Speaker, we have no idea what that means. There's no definition of what an exceptional innovation is.

You know, I saw a tweet today, and I thought, well this is pretty exceptional. A young fellow came up with the idea of you take your empty Kleenex box and you duct tape it to the full Kleenex box, so that when you need somewhere to put your used Kleenex, you can just put it in the old Kleenex box. Now that's an exceptional innovation, Mr. Speaker, and I think maybe that young fellow should be entitled to a 6 per cent corporate income tax rate for that intellectual property idea. Like what does this mean? We have no idea, and there's no explanation in the bill. So, as always, we're going to have a whole lot more questions for this government as they move along.

But I think the inconsistencies we see in . . . you know, and the minister bragging about meeting his promise, when we see promise after promise after promise broken from the last year's . . . their platform, and also when we now understand that much of what they intended to do wasn't in the platform because people aren't going to be happy with it. And saying that there was going to be a budget balance this year, when 12 months later we see a complete miss on last year's finances, and now we're looking at an over \$650 million deficit. Deficit after deficit — that's the promise of this government, Mr. Speaker, and it's the only one that they've been keeping. But they haven't made that promise; we just know that that's where they're headed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know others of my colleagues are going to want to speak to this bill as well, and I think that's the extent of my comments for today. We have a lot of questions. What are these regulations going to look like? What the heck does an exceptional innovation actually mean? And maybe our Kleenex box boy might be the one that could sort us out and let us know

whether he's on track or not. But at any rate, Mr. Speaker, that's the extent of my comments, so I would like to move to adjourn the debate on Bill No. 61, *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Act*.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has adjourned debate on Bill No. 61, *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 62

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 62 — *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Me again; I'm just rising now to speak to Bill No. 62. We know the role that labour-sponsored venture capital funds have played in Saskatchewan. And certainly I think the income tax incentives that have been afforded to taxpayers to invest in these local companies is always one that has been appreciated. I haven't done so well in my own labour-sponsored capital investments, Mr. Speaker, but that's another story for another day.

I guess what's really interesting about this bill is, again the government didn't quite get it right when they introduced the budget. So when the budget came out, they made an announcement they were reducing the allowable amount. It's clause 12(4)(d) of the existing bill. They're going to reduce it from 20 per cent to 15 per cent. But I understand from the Minister of Finance that there is some folks that made a couple of phone calls after the budget came out, and the minister brought forward their concerns to cabinet and indicated that you know, really the results could be achieved in a similar way by reducing it to 17.5 per cent. Which is what we now see in this bill instead of 15 per cent. And then there was some caps and some limitations that would be implied elsewhere. So it nets out to the same change if I understand correctly in that context.

But you know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when those two companies got the ear of the minister and asked him to make the change, he did. But we see SUMA struggling with significant impacts on their operations, and the 80 per cent of Saskatchewan people that live in urban municipalities, and yet this government just keeps on announcing without consulting.

So I'm not sure why they would pick winners and losers in this way, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a habit that they've gotten into since they got into power. And we saw it with SkipTheDishes last year, although they actually didn't even use that money. So that's an interesting story that we haven't really heard all the details on either. But you know, it's just the inconsistency that we see this government applying across the board. But these two companies had the ear of the minister, and he was able to

swiftly react and get cabinet assent after the budget was introduced and before we see this bill. So it's pretty agile and nimble ability on the part of cabinet to be able to do that.

And I think maybe the people, the 5,800 people that were out last weekend calling on the government to rethink the library cuts, that's 5,800 people and they're not getting any audience, Mr. Speaker. They have to do it through petitions and they have to do it through letters. But I don't think they're actually getting audience with the minister who is honestly and seriously listening to the concerns and thinking about the impacts that that particular cut is going to have on communities across the province.

I mean, these . . . The backbenchers know. They were in their offices and they saw who came out, Mr. Speaker. I was in Estevan and I saw over 100 people in front of the member from Estevan's office saying, this is really important to us. And I know she came out and spoke to them. But I'm hoping she's doing the same to the minister, Mr. Speaker, because it's the Minister of Education that is responsible for this decision, and this cabinet. So I hope all the backbenchers are taking these concerns seriously and being that voice that obviously these two labour venture capital fund companies have directly with the Minister of the Economy. So it's a question of access, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure how libraries are supposed to get access to the Minister of Education and the minister responsible for this cut. But it's just that inconsistency that we see throughout.

So I don't think that the changes to this will amount to a lot of financial changes. It's a fairly insignificant bill in that sense, Mr. Speaker. If I recall correctly, I think it's around \$200,000 and it doesn't take effect until next year. So there still is . . . And I may not be quite right on that, Mr. Speaker, but that's my recollection. So I think there will be time for us to review this more carefully in committee when it's ready to go there. And we'll have a few more questions for the minister at that time.

But I think this is just an example of the agile nimbleness that we saw from this minister being able to respond that quickly after budget, to make some changes before the bill was introduced, and yet we see nothing on the side of libraries. We see nothing on the side of hearing aids. We see nothing on the side of autism. And the list, as you know, Mr. Speaker, goes on and on and on. So I think at this point in time, I would like to say that concludes our comments at this point, and we'll look forward to the discussion in committee on Bill No. 62.

[16:30]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 62, *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations 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 Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill stand

committed? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I designate that Bill No. 62, *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2017* be committed to the Standing Committee on Economy.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:32.]

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