



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

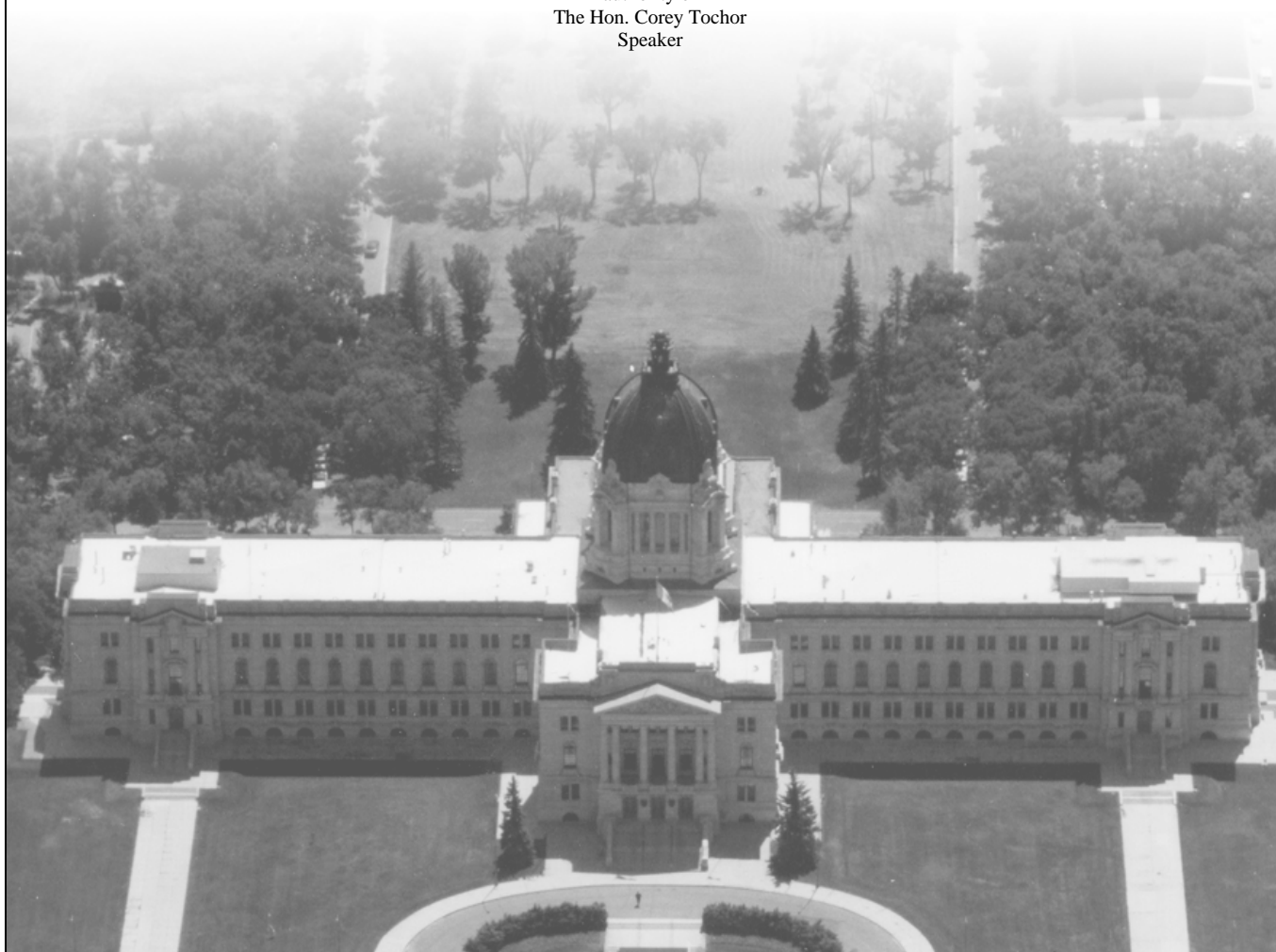
of the

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
2nd Session — 28th Legislature

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Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
Leader of the Opposition — Nicole Sarauer

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Marit , Hon. David — Wood River (SP)	

Vacancies — Kindersley, Melfort

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 47; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Vacant — 2

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Cox: — I request leave for an extended introduction, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member.

Hon. Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'm pleased to introduce and recognize a guest seated in your west gallery. Joining us this morning is Dr. Qingwang Yuan. He is joined today by some of his colleagues: Muhammad Imran — just give us a wave please — he's the business unit manager at the Saskatchewan Research Council; and Kelvin and Cyndie Knorr. Kelvin is the research operations manager at the Saskatchewan Research Council energy division.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Yuan is from the Shandong Province in China. He attended China University of Petroleum before coming to Canada and earning his Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] at the University of Calgary. Currently Dr. Yuan is a U of R [University of Regina] post-doctoral fellow in petroleum systems engineering.

Through a Mitacs fellowship with the Saskatchewan Research Council, he and his team developed software that improves enhanced oil recovery through modelling, allowing industry to be more efficient in the recovery process. This in turn may not only improve extracting heavy oil from the ground, but also reduce the impact on our environment.

Last week he was recognized for his work in Ottawa by being presented with the Mitacs post-doctoral award for outstanding innovation. And Dr. Yuan was one of five Mitacs award winners nationally.

Mr. Speaker, I also understand that he has accepted a position at Stanford University where he'll be continuing his work on the shale oil and gas production. Mr. Speaker, he has also indicated that he may be coming back to Saskatchewan after that, and we're very happy to hear that. And I believe that he's travelling to the US [United States] as quickly as this Saturday.

We'll be hearing more about Mitacs and the good work that the program does in a member's statement shortly. But certainly we want to wish Dr. Yuan well and thank him for his great work. With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to welcome him and his colleagues to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to quickly join with the minister opposite and, on behalf of the official opposition, welcome these fine individuals from the Saskatchewan Research Council and Dr. Yuan to his Legislative Assembly.

He may be heading off for that great fellowship at Stanford, but we're hoping that he's coming right back, Mr. Speaker, to continue the award-winning work that he is doing in this province and on subject matter that is of great importance to the people of Saskatchewan. So on behalf of the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Dr. Yuan to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a couple of guests seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Ramit Kar, the general manager for Uber in Western Canada. At Uber, Mr. Kar had helped pass Canada's first set of ride-share regulations in Edmonton as well as the launch of Uber in Calgary. With Mr. Kar is Jean-Christophe de le Rue, who is the communications associate for Uber in Canada.

I'm pleased to have these guests here today, and I thank them for coming and ask that members help me welcome them to our Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, home-based educators from my constituency, from the Meyronne and Assiniboia area, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to introduce to you Avery and Marina Smith and their five children . . . Sorry, my colleague's going to do that one. I'm sorry. Colin and Jill Smith and their four children from Wood River constituency; Sally Willis and their four children, also from Wood River constituency. And it's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce the grandmother to all these children up there, Pat Smith, a good friend of mine. And also Chris and Melissa Putman and their three children also, Mr. Speaker. And Teri Hanstock and her three children from Assiniboia. So I'd like to welcome all of them to their Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my honour to introduce, seated in your gallery, a couple of good friends and good people within our province. I'd like to introduce David Froh, who's a vice-president with Economic Development Regina, someone who certainly has the greater economic interests of this region and this province in mind at all times and someone who's worked on this front for some period of time. He also has some familiarity with this building, once serving as chief of staff to a minister of Energy and Resources.

I've known Dave for a long time. I'm lucky to count him as a good friend. I watched him in action years ago also working with young people dealing with some significant challenges, and watching him build relationships that made a difference in the lives of those young people. He was a decent football player back in the day, not so much anymore. A few interceptions back for I think the Regina Thunder at one point, a few for Sheldon-Williams. I think the gentleman sitting beside him, Eric Anderson, might suggest that had he had better hands he may have been a receiver. But it's my honour to welcome David Froh to his Assembly.

And I'd also like to welcome someone who's no stranger to this Assembly, Eric Anderson, who's seated beside David. Of course they're good friends. Eric Anderson is the coach of the Sheldon-Williams Spartans football team. They had a good season here this year. And he also is somebody that gives a lot back to his community. And of course he works as a research officer for us as the official opposition here in the province.

So I'd ask all members to welcome Eric Anderson and David Froh to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great privilege to reintroduce Avery and Marina Smith and their five children from the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. Not too many people are lucky enough to have two introductions in the same sitting but you are. Anyway they're part of the home-based educators from the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone. And I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in the west gallery is Morgan Schwager, if you can give us a wave. Morgan is here to watch the proceedings today. She is currently studying indigenous social work at the University of Regina. She also plays flute at the U of R concert band. She has volunteered extensively at the North Central Family Centre as well as helping fund raise for Syrian refugees that have come to our province.

Morgan has a keen love of politics. She's hoping to be a summer student in the legislature this next year. And beyond that, Mr. Speaker, her end goal is to sit on the benches over here with the Saskatchewan Party. And we wish her well in her endeavours, and I ask all of my colleagues to welcome her here today.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just join with the member from Regina Rosemont and welcome Mr. David Froh to his Legislative Assembly on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. I've known David for a long time as well. Actually David, Eric, and I have a tie. We all played senior bowl, I think Eric probably a year after us. But I

met David in grade 12 playing senior bowl, and he was a great football player. And he does a lot for the community in the area of Regina, first with STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership], now with Regina Downtown economic development. And I just want to say thank you very much for all you do and welcome you on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join the Minister of Advanced Education and say congratulations to Qingwang Yuan. And right beside him there is Muhammad Imran, is sitting beside him. Muhammad Imran is a constituent of mine, and he used to live in my neighbourhood. He just moved away a couple of blocks away from my house now. He is a father of four and working in the Saskatchewan Research Council. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all this House to welcome Imran in his legislative.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I would like to introduce a few of my friends sitting in your gallery, Carter Stewart, Blair Stewart, and Shahid Pervaiz. Shahid Pervaiz is one of my best friends, known him very many, many years. And, Mr. Speaker, Blair was the founder of Fill-More Seeds and well known in seed cleaning and shipping special crops. Mr. Speaker, Blair is the owner of the longest straight rail line in the world. Now that is from Stoughton to Richardson. I ask all the members of the Assembly to join me, welcome Carter, Blair, and Shahid in their own Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a second to introduce Cyndie Knorr to the Assembly this morning. Cyndie's here with a group from the Research Council, but she is also a very able and capable photographer in her own right. She has a photography business and is a member of the Canadian photography association, gives back to her community.

And her son Raymond Knorr represented Saskatchewan this summer at the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Championship and he did very, very well. I think it was third place, fourth place he came in. And they have three very musical children. Their son Ben is studying at Berklee school of music in Boston right now. So a very, very talented family, talented children, and a great mom. And I would like everyone to welcome Cyndie to her Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've saved the best for last in the introductions and that's the grade 12 students, 37 grade 12 students from A.E. Peacock Collegiate in my constituency of Moose Jaw North. I'd like to welcome them and especially welcome Mrs. Kiefer, who is very diligent in bringing a class here every year to watch the proceedings and learn a little bit about the legislative process. So I ask all members to welcome the grade 12 class from A.E. Peacock and Mrs. Kiefer. Thank you for coming.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to join the member for Regina Pasqua in introducing Blair and Carter Stewart and Shahid, and welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

Stewart Southern Rail has been a great venture, which has built 80 to \$100 million worth of business along Highway 33 because of that railroad being in operation. It's a benefit to the entire province, and I would ask the Assembly to welcome them to their Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens from across the province who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the citizens of the province that will cripple our economy and take us backwards. 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 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 our province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from citizens of Spiritwood, Canwood, Shell Lake, and Leask. I do present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for critical supports for survivors of domestic violence. Those who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: Saskatchewan has the highest rate of domestic violence amongst provinces; employers should be obligated to reasonably accommodate survivors of domestic violence in the workplace; and employees who are survivors of domestic violence should be able to take a leave of absence from their employment without penalty. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Legislative Assembly to pass legislation providing critical support for survivors of domestic violence.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is what we're calling for in Bill No. 605. We hope that the government takes it on and passes it in its full form. The individuals who have signed this petition today come from Regina and Pilot Butte. I do so present.

[10:15]

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to stand today to present a petition for a second bridge for Prince Albert. The individuals that signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Diefenbaker bridge in Prince Albert is the primary link that connects the southern part of the province to the North; and that the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today.

Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution; and that the local municipal governments have limited resources and require a second bridge to be funded through federal and provincial governments and not a P3 [public-private partnership] model; and that the Saskatchewan Party government refuses to stand up for Prince Albert in this crucial infrastructure issue.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition come from the city of Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present another petition calling for the reopening of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre, Mr. Speaker. In this time of truth and reconciliation, the decision by this government to close the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre in the North moved precisely in the opposite direction of the action called for out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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

The petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan immediately reopen the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre to better our community for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by individuals from the Buffalo Narrows community. I so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to stop the cuts to our kids' classrooms. Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: that the Sask Party has cut at least \$674 in government funding for every student across the province; that the Sask Party hiked education property taxes by \$67 million but cut total government funding for classrooms by \$121 million; and that even though the Sask Party is making us all pay more, our kids are actually getting less.

They also wish to draw our attention to the fact that these cuts means that students will lose much needed supports in their classroom, including reduction of the number of teachers, the number of EAs [educational assistant], speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, as well as pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs for children with special needs.

I'll read the prayer:

We, the undersigned, call upon the government to reverse the senseless cuts to our kids' classrooms and stop making families, teachers, and everyone who works to support our education pay the price for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Regina and Prince Albert. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

World AIDS Day

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow we recognize World AIDS Day. Each year, on December 1st, we show support to those who live with HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] and AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] and their loved ones. And we remember those who lost their life.

HIV/AIDS continues to impact many people across Saskatchewan but, Mr. Speaker, much progress has been made in this fight. With early diagnosis and proper treatment, people can live healthy, productive lives, but there are barriers that prevent people from getting tested and seeking care. Stigma and discrimination are among those barriers. Great strides have been made in communities that have addressed HIV stigma and taken proactive steps to engage people in testing and care. I commend them for that.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the seriousness of this issue and remains committed to addressing the high HIV rates in Saskatchewan. We continue to invest in better access to testing and treatment, preventing new infections, and improving the lives of people living with HIV and AIDS. We're working with dedicated partners, health care providers, federal government, community-based organizations, leaders, people living with HIV and their families, and today I want to thank them for all their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members join me in acknowledging World AIDS Day. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Cumberland House Wins Northern Football Championship

Mr. Vermette: — On a rainy, snowy, windy October day in Prince Albert, two northern football teams battled it out on the Max Clunie field. The Creighton Kodiaks and the Cumberland

House Islanders faced off for the northern championship on October 21st. Facing typical Saskatchewan fall weather, the two young football teams played their hearts out in front of many family and friends.

The Creighton Kodiaks took an 18-0 lead into halftime and controlled most of the play. However, determined play by the Islanders allowed them to claw back against the Kodiaks and claim a 32-24 victory and claimed their second northern football championship.

The Islanders went undefeated in the northern football league this past season and hosted their first provincial football game against the Rosthern Huskies. Thank you to the coaches, fans, and volunteers at Charlebois Community School for supporting the Islanders this season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Research Internships

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and share how government continues to support research internships for our graduate students. Mr. Speaker, our government is providing 400,000 to support 94 internships in science, technology, engineering, math through Mitacs. Mitacs is a national, non-profit organization committed to driving Canadian innovation through research skills training for Canadian best students.

Mr. Speaker, one of those students, Dr. Qingwang Yuan, joins us today. His work is just one example of how investment in Mitacs supports innovation and industry right here in Saskatchewan. Since 2007 a total of 11 million has been invested by the funding partners in Mitacs programming in Saskatchewan. With this year's funding, Saskatchewan will have provided 256 million to Mitacs since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read a quote by Alejandro Adem, CEO [chief executive officer] and scientific director for Mitacs. He says, "With this investment, the Government of Saskatchewan is helping Mitacs researchers like Qingwang Yuan connect with local companies to develop new technologies, improve processes, and increase production."

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all the members to join me in thanking Mitacs and our partners for providing innovative results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

World AIDS Day

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge World AIDS Day coming up tomorrow, December 1st, raising awareness of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the highest rate of HIV in Canada, a shameful three times the national average in fact. Mr. Speaker, I also want to note that infection rates are growing across the province, an alarming trend that other jurisdictions are not seeing. As legislators, we need to be doing more as a

province to work with communities to prevent HIV and to better support those who are HIV positive. Mr. Speaker, we need to be prioritizing preventative measures to deal with this crisis in our province.

I want to take this moment to recognize the incredible efforts and work of advocates and front-line health care workers in this regard. We know that this work is not easy, and we appreciate the incredible effort you put in every day.

As part of World AIDS Day, a coalition of advocacy groups, including AIDS Saskatoon, Sanctum Care Group, Persons Living with AIDS Network of Saskatchewan, All Nations Hope, and AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan, will be raising the provincial awareness flag tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. at the Saskatchewan legislature.

I ask all members to join me in thanking these organizations for all that they do to raise awareness of this issue, work to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, support those living with this illness, and fight for change. Thank you.

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

Global Entrepreneurship Week

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 13th to 19th was Global Entrepreneurship Week, and 2017 marks its 10th anniversary. Around the world, this week inspires of thousands of events and competitions in over 160 countries, encouraging the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Here in Saskatchewan a number of outstanding events were hosted, bringing together many of our province's innovative entrepreneurs. In Saskatoon, Square One held an event called Fuel, which was a small-business exposition. Fuel gathered government departments, non-profit organizations, and businesses that support and celebrate small businesses. The event gave entrepreneurs a chance to meet face to face with experts who provide valuable programs, services, and products to small businesses.

Another event, Ignite your Ideas, was held in both Saskatoon and Regina. Ignite gave space to an innovative platform, putting entrepreneurs in front of as many professional mentors as possible in a short time frame.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses, which are businesses with fewer than 50 employees, account for over 98 per cent of the businesses in our province. They are active in virtually every sector of the economy, providing vital inputs that keep the wheels of industry turning. Saskatchewan's business-friendly policies and strong economy in recent years have been reflected in a growing small-business sector.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join with me in thanking small-business owners and employees who help keep Saskatchewan strong. Thank you.

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

Manufacturing Week

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week is Manufacturing Week in Saskatchewan. Manufacturing is one of the province's strongest and most vital industries. Last year the value of manufacturing shipments totalled over \$14 billion and manufacturing employed over 25,000 people. As of December 2016, Saskatchewan had 1,081 manufacturing establishments. Nearly 89 per cent of these were classified as small businesses having fewer than 50 employees.

Mr. Speaker, in real dollar terms, Saskatchewan's manufacturing GDP [gross domestic product] increased at an average growth rate of 2.8 per cent per year from 2006 to 2016. Over that decade, this percentage increase was the highest among the provinces — a massive improvement in productivity and success, something we did not see when the members opposite were in power. Mr. Speaker, during the last decade the value of our manufacturing shipments grew at the highest average rate of any province: 3.7 per cent a year.

Mr. Speaker, looking beyond the numbers and percentages, we see how valuable manufacturing is to this province, and we need to recognize the efforts of hard-working individuals all across this province. The success of manufacturing contributes to our growing economy and makes Saskatchewan strong and prosperous.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing Manufacturing Week. Thank you.

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

Opposition Policy on Taxation

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we continued to see the hypocrisy from the members opposite. Not only did the member from Nutana misquote and misrepresent the Minister of Finance's comments yesterday, but she obviously has not explained economics to her caucus colleagues. Members opposite have called for more spending almost every day in this Assembly, then have the gall to complain about deficits, but the member from Fairview asked the government yesterday, and I quote, "... stimulate the economy, and start helping Saskatchewan people get back to work?"

Great sentiment from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. News flash: 20 minutes later they voted against tax changes to support small business. The Finance critic said that businesses hitting \$500,000 threshold are too big to deserve any help. And I ask her, where is your cut-off for small business in the NDP [New Democratic Party]?

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the NDP MPs [Member of Parliament] and the Saskatchewan NDP executive members lobby the federal government for tax changes this year that would have devastated small business and farmers. Members opposite continue to talk out both sides of their mouths on finances, on deficits, on pipelines, and now on taxes, Mr. Speaker. Those NDP policies certainly grew economies before, Mr. Speaker, primarily in Alberta and Manitoba. Members on this side will keep on working for the Saskatchewan people.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

State of Provincial Finances

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Finance minister and the Premier spoke about being on track. It was almost as though they were hoping no one would notice the track leads to a \$680 million deficit. Almost like they were hoping no one would notice that were taking the entire debt that our province has accumulated since 1905 and doubling it in just five years.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's almost like they were hoping no one would notice that they have pretty much thrown their plan out the window since they dropped their budget last spring. Mr. Speaker, even their own leadership candidates admit that. Half of them don't think the government will meet their goal of getting to balance by 2019, and that includes the Premier's deputy minister who's on leave from her senior role in the public service to run to lead the party. She says to show compassion, they need an extra year.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, what does the Deputy Premier think? Does he stand by his Finance minister or will he show compassion and admit their so-called plan is off by at least a year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I have to say that that question does demonstrate that, yes indeed, the NDP don't understand finances. When you have a budget and it projects a deficit, and then at second quarter you're at that particular . . . you're projecting that you're at the number that was in the budget, that's on track, Mr. Speaker. That's not a surprise. It's not a surprise. That number was in our budget. We have a three-year plan, Mr. Speaker. It's unlike the members opposite that have absolutely no plan.

And what happens when that happens, Mr. Speaker? Well next door in Alberta the Dominion Bond agency had this to say:

DBRS has maintained the negative trend because the province has yet to demonstrate any real willingness to address the weakest budget outlook among all provinces despite high levels of per capita spending and the lowest tax burden in the country. DBRS is concerned that the plan to return to balance relies on recovery in resource revenues, rather than fundamental adjustments to the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this province is doing things differently. We're addressing that issue, Mr. Speaker, and our credit rating remains strong.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is, they've been making it all up as they go along. When the budget came up, they all said it had to be done. The Premier said that every cut and tax hike was "difficult but necessary." And the Finance

minister said, "Are we prepared to walk back on other things? No." Mr. Speaker, in May the Premier defended all of the heartless cuts, the unfair tax hikes, and even the plans to sell off our Crowns and told Saskatchewan people, "I remain confident that we made the right decisions."

Mr. Speaker, in just the last six months they have flip-flopped quite a bit. Much of that was good news. Cuts to funerals for the most vulnerable and our libraries were very hard to fathom. But, Mr. Speaker, even after all these changes, the Premier still says his party can get to balance. If that's true, were those cuts and tax hikes ever necessary in the first place? And what other damaging decisions could have been avoided if the Sask Party had actually made a real plan before dropping their mismanagement, scandal, and waste on the backs of Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the plan is working because we're on track to where we said we would be. That is taking a \$1.2 billion shortfall in revenue resources, something that has been . . . [inaudible] . . . over the last three years, Mr. Speaker, and almost cutting it in half in this first year. And yes, Mr. Speaker, there was difficult decisions that needed to be made. And yes, we had a contingency to address unintended consequences because we went places that we hadn't gone before. Mr. Speaker, we made those changes. I'm glad the members opposite recognize that those were good decisions, Mr. Speaker. They want to just keep spending more and more money in every single area. Mr. Speaker, they don't want the debt to go up. They want the budget to balance. They want to spend more and more and more money, Mr. Speaker. That is not a plan, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, let's just look at the corporate tax giveaway they put in their budget. The then Finance minister tried to justify it by saying that some wealthy business owners, including people in his own caucus, make over half a million dollars a year and would benefit from a tax break. When we opposed it and said it was a gift to their corporate friends, they scoffed and said it was absolutely necessary to stimulate the economy. Then they scrapped it. Mr. Speaker, now they've created a new level of elite — so-called small businesses. These are those same businesses, and apparently Sask Party caucus members that make over \$500,000 and aren't considered small businesses anywhere else in the country.

Mr. Speaker, given all of their other heartless cuts, including scrapping the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] and all of the tax hikes they've piled on families, small businesses, and producers — including on health and life insurance — how can the Deputy Premier justify this tax giveaway that will cost the people of Saskatchewan over \$11 million a year and doesn't even help over 92 per cent of small businesses in this province, who are the real job creators?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is saying that these are so-called small

businesses show how out of touch they truly are with the business community within this province.

Mr. Speaker, since 2008 CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] has had these recommendations or requests of the government, and they are this. I suppose they didn't ask before, because they knew how out of touch those members were, so they didn't even ask for this. And they have corporate tax relief, small-business income tax threshold, increase the small-business threshold from 500,000 to 750,000, Mr. Speaker. This has been requested since 2008, and this is a representative agency for small business — the real small business in this province, Mr. Speaker.

But tell me something, Mr. Speaker. If they're so wise in relief for small business, I want them to tell me, what will \$15 a minimum wage affect small business and job creation in this province? Because that is what one of their candidates is asking for. What would a carbon tax in this province affect small business in this province, Mr. Speaker, which is what those members opposite support?

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

Global Transportation Hub and Details of Land Transactions

Ms. Sproule: — Oh, I was so caught up in the discussion, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's shift a little bit. The Sask Party's GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal keeps growing, but as we all know, there are answers to questions. There are answers to questions that we still need about the Sask Party scandal that wasted millions of taxpayers' dollars.

Yesterday the Provincial Auditor tabled answers to questions that I asked in committee last year. That was when we were starting to dig into the Sask Party scandal. And in her answers it's now clear that the government did not give the auditor all the information, despite what they have repeated time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, last year I asked the auditor, who in cabinet was on the GTH subcommittee that directed the scandal to proceed? She said, "I do not have the names of the individuals on cabinet at that time, or the names of the individuals on its subcommittees." Really? Why didn't the government disclose to the auditor who from cabinet was on the GTH subcommittee? And will they tell us today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment, GTH, and Sask Power.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after watching question period for the last number of weeks, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious why question period probably should end about seven minutes in each and every day, as the member opposite just confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, this government has provided the opportunity for the Provincial Auditor to request any documentation, cabinet information, Mr. Speaker. We've been very clear about that, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite who, when there

were questions with respect to the operation of the government of the day when it came to projects and business dealings by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, the only transparency that was provided was for the deputy minister to the Premier, the hand-picked deputy minister to the Premier to do an internal report, Mr. Speaker, that basically cleared the government of any problems.

Mr. Speaker, we've asked the Provincial Auditor. We invited the Provincial Auditor. We gave access to information that the Provincial Auditor required, Mr. Speaker. That's how we conduct ourselves on this side of the House.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, it's answers like that that sometimes make a farce of question period. It's just a few names. And Saskatchewan people have the right to know which cabinet ministers ultimately let this land scandal proceed before the Premier signed off on it.

But there is more, Mr. Speaker. I also asked the auditor for information surrounding the mysterious, unsolicited phone call that Bill Boyd, the then GTH minister received about the sale of the GTH land. And despite what the current GTH minister and the one before him have been saying over and over all along, she said that that information was not included in the scope of the audit. She also said that when it comes to that mysterious phone call, "We did not interview individuals specifically in relation to the call." Well, Mr. Speaker, why? It's because it was beyond her cabinet-mandated scope.

This is an important question that could help us finally get to the bottom of this Sask Party scandal that has wasted millions. So will the minister finally allow Bill Boyd and Laurie Pushor to testify in front of a legislative committee so we can get to the bottom about that phone call?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Global Transportation Hub.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, the cabinet-mandated authorization for the Provincial Auditor was the ... The Provincial Auditor is an independent officer of this legislature and could have access to any information that she requested, which we provided, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to further work that may take place, the Premier has indicated that in light of the fact that the file has apparently been turned over to a prosecutions branch in another province, that the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], to my knowledge, have concluded their look at this, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier has indicated that that doesn't rule out taking further action.

The member knows this. The member has been here for a number of years now, Mr. Speaker. She knows this information. We have said this information, Mr. Speaker. I don't mind standing and repeating myself time after time after time. But the member does know this.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Lakeview.

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, none of them are willing to admit to the facts, and here's just one more fact that they keep denying. They raised education property taxes and cut tens of millions of dollars in government funding from our kids' classrooms. The Education minister can deny it or sidestep it all she wants, but we're paying more and we're getting less. And yet the minister says that the situation is "balanced." Mr. Speaker, she even claims that people are happy because the cuts were less severe than they could have been.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've now received a ministerial briefing note prepared in August that says, and I quote, "All boards have expressed concern about not having sufficient funding." Mr. Speaker, if this is what her own briefing notes say, why has she been saying something so very different?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we've been over this in recent days. I referenced one specific division whose chief financial officer was quoted as saying, "They reduced where possible including on unnecessary travel. Look for efficiencies as directed by the government." She said, "All the changes we've made have not resulted in any changes at the classroom level. This is responsible fiscal stewardship."

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon Public, Regina Catholic, St. Paul's Catholic, Prairie Valley, among others, have seen classroom-based, full-time employee numbers — which of course include teachers — increase, along with enrolments, Mr. Speaker. Again we want to acknowledge divisions' efforts to minimize those front-line impacts to the classroom, to be those sound fiscal stewards, Mr. Speaker, across this province this year, of over 9,000 regular, classroom-based, full-time employees, which again includes teachers. There are 95 fewer, that is true, through attrition and retirement. Of course that poses some challenges, Mr. Speaker. We thank divisions for their commitment to putting students first.

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

Ms. Beck: — Yet again, Mr. Speaker, that minister is incredibly out of touch, not only with her file but with reality. Let me quote from that internal briefing again: "Overall, the relationship with the sector is strained." Well, Mr. Speaker, no kidding. Parents, trustees, and everyone who works in education and in our schools, and yet even, unfortunately, the students, know that this is true. Everyone, it would seem, but that minister.

Mr. Speaker, even their leadership candidates can see the truth. The member from Saskatoon Northwest said, "... I think there were some people that we didn't listen to. We need to pay a bit more attention to education and to our health care system."

Mr. Speaker, when will the Minister of Education stop denying the facts and actually start listening to what is going on in our classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day the member opposite stands up and questions our commitment to education, our record investment in education over the last 10 years. She mentions a lot of groups and a lot of stakeholders, and they're all very important, Mr. Speaker. But there's one group she doesn't mention very much, which was a first today, and that's the parents of this province, Mr. Speaker.

There is one very important commitment to students, teachers, and parents that we're undertaking on this side, and that's invoking the notwithstanding clause to protect school choice, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite cannot seem to decide which side she's on. None of them can. One day she charges we're "playing politics." The next day she acknowledges that, "Of course the parents who should be and would be impacted by this decision would be concerned about their children being disrupted." So which is it, Mr. Speaker?

She's also said, "Invoking the notwithstanding clause is without precedent." Not so. And you know who was a key advocate for it in the first place, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Allan Blakeney. I'm sorry to break it to her, but the die is legally cast. We had to do something about it. And what we had to do, and parents asked us to do, was to take action to protect school choice in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

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

Support for Social Services

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, another minister that's out of touch is the Minister of Social Services. Yes, Social Services spending is up, but that's because more people are relying on social services. And that's nothing to brag about.

The reality is the Sask Party have made cuts to programs that people depend on. They cut the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program, cut supports for people with special dietary needs, and only partially walked back their cut to funerals for the most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, even the Premier's chosen candidate to replace him said that cuts to Social Services made by the Sask Party were "a little too harsh."

Does the current Social Services minister agree? Like the former minister, do these cuts weigh heavily on him? And will he reverse these cuts?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And first off, I reject the premise of the question. I'm very proud of what we've done in Social Services, Mr. Speaker. One thing that I'm most proud of, and I've said this before and I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker, is the SAID program.

We have increased all of our programs year over year, Mr.

Speaker. We have diversified our programs to make sure that they are tailored to the clients that are needed, Mr. Speaker. In a very tough financial year, Mr. Speaker, we were able to increase the services to social assistance because we have seen an increase of clients coming in to Social Services, and within our department we're ready to be able to meet those needs immediately, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, we already know that the Sask Party Social Services ministers like to say they aren't heartless people, but they have to start showing it. Mr. Speaker, it's AIDS Awareness Week and Saskatchewan is faced with the reality that Saskatchewan HIV rates continue to get worse.

Clearly we should be increasing social services like housing and addiction supports to address this crisis. Instead, the Sask Party has been cutting programs and crucial supports like mobile crisis and the Lighthouse. Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear that these programs save lives, reduce the spread of HIV, and actually save money in the long run. So why is the minister not willing to address this crisis through cost-effective social supports?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being World AIDS Day coming up, Mr. Speaker, we're very supportive of all of the programs that our community-based organizations do to be able to serve the clients with AIDS. As far as Social Services, Mr. Speaker, we work in conjunction with the Health ministry to make sure that all of the needs are able to be met from the clients.

In regards to the Lighthouse, Mr. Speaker, we haven't cut any funding and I want to correct them on the record on that. If they're referring specifically to North Battleford, we do a fee-for-service basis on that, Mr. Speaker, and if there are clients there that need that service, we will be able to provide that fee for service, Mr. Speaker. But again, on the record, we haven't cut any funding to the Lighthouse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rate of HIV Infections

Ms. Chartier: — How about the cut to the special diet for people living with HIV, Mr. Speaker? This government doesn't get it. Saskatchewan has the highest rate of HIV in Canada and there are almost triple the number of new cases in the province than the national average. We are the only province that has seen HIV incidence go up, and HIV doctors in this province are saying this is "cause for alarm."

Mr. Speaker, numbers are going up in rural and remote areas. People simply can't get access to the services they need, and funding for HIV in the province hasn't even kept pace with inflation. Mr. Speaker, the rise of HIV in Saskatchewan has been called a crisis. So why has the Sask Party failed to take

any real or effective action to save lives?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The increase in HIV diagnosis is extremely troubling. We're very concerned about it. Mr. Speaker, last year a number of months ago when this issue was raised, Dr. Denise Werker, who is the deputy chief medical health officer, spoke to this.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in diagnosis is in great degree to the increase in testing that's done, Mr. Speaker. We've dramatically increased the amount of testing that's been done over the years. Early diagnosis is extremely important. Mr. Speaker, we have increased numbers of staff support. In 2010 we implemented a \$4 million a year injection of cash into HIV diagnosis and various treatments around that, Mr. Speaker. We've continued, we've continued that . . . Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue and yet the member across heckles during it, the member from Meewasin, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to subsequent questions on this matter.

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

Support for Worker Safety

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the latest numbers on workplace fatalities are out, and I think we can all agree that even one death in the workplace is one too many. But still, here in Saskatchewan we have the second-lowest fines in the country for employers whose workplace safety violations result in a worker being killed on the job. Mr. Speaker, the number of workplace fatalities here in Saskatchewan had been declining for years, but then they plateaued. And after seeing these numbers, what is the minister doing to protect Saskatchewan workers?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have a Mission: Zero plan in our province where even one injury is one too many. It's something we take seriously. For somebody to go to work in the morning, and their family realize that at the end of the day that they're not coming home, is something that's simply unacceptable — not just to this side of the House but to both sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012 and 2014 this government increased fines. Fines from a corporation went from 500,000 to 1.5 million. Fines for individuals went from 300,000 . . . were increased 120,000. Mr. Speaker, the new maximum corporate fine is actually now the highest in Canada. Mr. Speaker, prior to that, fines were not increased since 1994. The critic, who is the member opposite who asked the question, was the Labour minister at the time. Never increased the fines once during his time.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the government has had a decade,

a decade to take meaningful action to protect employees and they need to start taking accountability for their own action. And these are just not numbers; they're real people who went to work and never came home. They worked in both the private and public sectors.

Mr. Speaker, we must do a much better job to protect the working people of Saskatchewan from dying at work. And, Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the Westray Act at the federal level and I know both the minister and I have met with the United Steelworkers on this particular issue of people dying at work. So again, what is the minister's plan to improve the outcome for Saskatchewan workers?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've reduced the workplace time-loss injury rate by 10 per cent from 2015. The rate has gone from 2.07 in 2015 to 1.86 in 2016. We are improving all the way across Canada, but in Saskatchewan we are improving faster than other jurisdictions. We are now 62 per cent lower than we were in 2002, which was the all-time high — an injury rate of 4.95 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we've implemented a targeted intervention strategy where we work with the employers that have the highest injury rate. We've implemented new regulations for late-night retail stores. We've implemented Canada's first asbestos registry. The strategy is seeing results: 2015-16, 14 per cent reduction; 2016-17, a 10 per cent reduction. Mr. Speaker, we have more work to do. We are proceeding in the right direction. But, Mr. Speaker, I'd urge the members to continue to work with us.

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

Charges Under Environmental Laws

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk a little bit more than about scandals. No matter how many scandals pile up, and no matter how many times the Premier and the rest of the Sask Party have the opportunity to distance themselves from Bill Boyd, they refuse to. The list of his scandals is long, but there's something about the most recent one that really stands out.

Mr. Speaker, in August Mr. Boyd was charged with breaking laws that fall under the Ministry of the Environment. Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the Sask Water Security Agency, which also falls under the Ministry of the Environment, granted him irrigation permits on the same property.

Mr. Speaker, this doesn't do much to support the Minister of the Environment's claims that they take irrigation and illegal drainage seriously. What has the minister done to look into the situation to make sure that the left hand of his ministry is talking to the right hand?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the

member for her question. Four charges were laid against that gentleman under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act*, the EMPA. The matter is before the courts and will go through the legal process as it would for any other individual, and at this point we can't comment any farther on it.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 114 — *The Vehicles for Hire Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 114, *The Vehicles for Hire Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Crown Investments have moved first reading of Bill No. 114. 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.

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

The Speaker: — When shall . . . first reading? I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 607 — *The All Families are Equal Act*

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

Mr. Forbes: — I move that Bill No. 607, the all families are equal bill be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved first reading of Bill No. 607. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Mr. Forbes: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 73 and 74.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 73 and 74.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Government Supports for Small Businesses

Mr. Olason: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise to my feet in my place today to speak about how valuable small and medium-sized businesses are here in Saskatchewan. Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. Our government proudly stands behind them and supports them.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan NDP stood in this legislature to vote against government legislation designed to lower costs for small businesses by raising their income threshold to \$600,000. By raising the income threshold, Mr. Speaker, small businesses have greater incentive to hire more workers and invest in new capital right here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that doesn't sound like they're standing shoulder to shoulder to shoulder with Saskatchewan people at all, Mr. Speaker.

Per capita, Saskatchewan has the highest number of small businesses. There are 129 small businesses for every 1,000 people in Saskatchewan. The national average is only 105. Ninety-eight per cent of businesses here in Saskatchewan are small businesses, Mr. Speaker. That speaks volumes to the over 30 per cent of GDP these businesses contribute to our economy. Without the income these businesses generate, we certainly would be at a far different place than we are today.

[11:00]

Small business is big business in Saskatchewan. Small business, and that's businesses with fewer than 50 employees, Mr. Speaker, account for almost 99 per cent of the more than 150,000 business enterprises in our province. They are active in virtually every sector of our economy, providing vital inputs that keep the wheels of industry turning. Small businesses are a source of innovative products and services that contribute to the quality of life that we all enjoy.

In 2016 small businesses employed 31 per cent of Saskatchewan workers and paid out over \$6.2 billion in wages and salaries, 26 per cent of the province's total payroll. Saskatchewan ranks third among the provinces for the share of its total economic output generated by small businesses. Small business is vital to the health of the economy. Increasing the income threshold to \$600,000 provides Saskatchewan small

businesses with an incentive to hire more workers and invest new capital right here in our province. Meanwhile, rates for personal income tax in Saskatchewan continue to be reduced, which also helps stimulate employment.

Over one-quarter of Saskatchewan's payroll earnings are from small business. Earnings of small-business employees in Saskatchewan are the third-highest in Canada and have the second-highest growth rate among the provinces.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's time for a little history. In 2007, Mr. Speaker, there were 94,904 small businesses in Saskatchewan. Today, 10 years later, there are 148,533. Mr. Speaker, that's a 64 per cent increase. The question begs to be asked, Mr. Speaker: why? The answer, and you've heard it here before, many, many times, Mr. Speaker: policy matters.

Now the first policy change came on July 1st, 2008. On that date the threshold for small-business income was revised upward to \$500,000. At that time, Mr. Speaker, the tax rate was four and a half per cent. That was a good start.

The next policy change came on July 1st, 2011, once again implemented by the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. This was the big one where we lowered the tax rate for small businesses from four and a half to two per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, from July 1st, 2011 to today there was a huge growth of small business to the current 148,000. Once again, Mr. Speaker, we ask the question: why? And once again the answer is, policies matter.

Since 2011, the sectors with the highest percentage employment growth have been construction; public administration; accommodation and food services; professional, scientific, and technical services; and educational services, Mr. Speaker. In 2016, average weekly earnings in Saskatchewan small business were at \$816, the third highest in Canada. Small-business earnings in Saskatchewan were about 1 per cent higher than the Canadian average. In Saskatchewan, small-business employees' earnings grew, on average, by 3.1 per cent per year between 2006 and 2016, the second-highest growth rate in Canada. The national average rate was 2 per cent per year over that same time period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as always, we're in touch with constituents that have small business. We're in touch with constituents that work for small business. And every once in a while we get emails from small-business owners and small-business employees telling us their story. And I'd like to share one here today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here's an excerpt from an email I received from Mark and Janneke Friesen, who own The Tree Whisperer arborist service in Saskatoon. And I quote, the email says, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

I started my business as a way to make a little extra revenue while I was a full-time employee for the federal government in 2012. I had an old, beat-up truck and a chainsaw, so I started cutting down and pruning trees for neighbours, friends, and relatives. I had a lot of experience while I was growing up cutting trees, so it was a natural fit for a small start-up. I soon became quite busy and had to

buy another chainsaw and recruit a friend to give me a hand.

From those humble beginnings, I have now been able to retire from my job as a correction officer after 25 years of service and go full time with my tree service. We have had steady growth, doubled every year, with 2017 being no different. We've added equipment: seven chainsaws, climbing gear, PPE, a dump trailer, big-capacity chipper and chip truck, two other support trucks, a stump grinder and cargo trailer, as well as a skid-steer and a flat-deck trailer.

Our growth is steady and sustainable to the point where we will need to hire a second crew for next season. I had four full-time employees this past season, and I will be hiring an additional three workers next season.

Mark continues in his email. He says:

To continue to grow and create revenue and employment opportunities throughout the winter months, we've added snow removal to our list of services, both residential and small commercial customers.

Mr. Speaker, here's a good point in his email here. He says, and I quote:

We have been able to sustain and support this growth in large part because we have a business-friendly government that is keeping the small-business tax at a reasonable rate while allowing us to reinvest our income into our company to support that increased demand. I hope to be able to continue to grow my business by adding additional equipment and personnel as demand and revenue dictates and budget expenses and [in quotation marks] "taxes" allow.

Mr. Speaker, that's just one small business in Saskatoon that's continuing to invest in their own businesses, hire new people, and continue to grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan small businesses are under attack. Our federal government has criticized them as tax cheats and demonized them. Over the summer, while many family businesses were preparing for harvest and providing goods and services ancillary to harvest, the federal government introduced corporate income tax proposals that stated a large percentage of small businesses are merely a vehicle for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes. In fact the NDP MP Erin Weir questioned the need for individuals like doctors and farmers to incorporate at all, ignoring the fact that the federal changes as proposed would have not only had serious consequences for the economy, but would make it virtually impossible for farms to be passed on from one generation to the next.

Mr. Speaker, our government supported the outcry from small businesses and wrote to the federal Finance minister outlining our opposition to the proposed changes. We respect hard-working business owners and we recognize and appreciate the importance of small business to the overall health of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this tax change will save some small businesses \$10,000 a year. Where do you think they're going to spend that money? If past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what they'll do. They'll use that money to invest in their companies, whether it's in equipment, supplies, a renovation, or most likely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in people. It will help ensure the viability of that small business and allow further expansion. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, it will help ensure that small business lays down deeper roots and stays in our community.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister said it best Tuesday night at committee. She said:

We . . . [are] mindful of economic reports. We know that small business is the number one employer in our province. We hear from small businesses. And when they do better, they tend to (a) spend money within our economy, but (b), most importantly, they hire the most people. They're the number one employer.

I couldn't agree more. Mr. Speaker, the NDP are constantly asking government for investment and more spending while continuing to call the government out for deficits. Mr. Speaker, we are making a small, targeted investment in our economy through small businesses. And that investment this year is almost \$4 million.

Now here's what the NDP said on Twitter yesterday: "We will continue to fight for small businesses but we will not support the Sask Party's attempt to help only the wealthy and well connected."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the majority of small-business owners that I know and the entrepreneurs that are starting new businesses in Saskatchewan would not be considered wealthy. And as far as being connected, I don't know. I guess I see them when I go and buy a pop or a loaf of bread or fill up my car with gas. You know, I guess you could say they are connected. They're connected to their community, to their neighbours, to the many charities and churches they support. So yes, Mr. Speaker, I guess they are connected, well connected, but in a good way, not in the way the opposition means it, Mr. Speaker, but they are absolutely well connected to their communities.

So let's look west and see what's happening over there, Mr. Speaker. Under the Alberta NDP government, deficits have exploded. Businesses are leaving, and investment is flowing out of their borders. In the spring, the NDP unleashed a wrath of tax increases, including a significant hike to the corporate income tax rate. What that does, Mr. Speaker, is hit average families right in the pocketbook in the form of lower wages.

Higher business taxes discourage investment. When businesses can invest in equipment, machines, or technology, workers produce more. That creates higher valued outputs, increasing our productivity. Higher productivity increases wages. Higher corporate taxes stifle productivity, therefore decreasing wages.

A University of Calgary study recently looked into this further, Mr. Speaker. This study estimates that Alberta's NDP's 2 per cent corporate tax rate will reduce labour earnings by about

\$830 per year per person. In fact the DBRS [Dominion Bond Rating Service Ltd.] has taken notice of Alberta once again, Mr. Speaker, and not in a good way. Alberta has just received another downgrade in its credit score. The *Calgary Herald* writes, "Rating agency DBRS announced Wednesday that it had downgraded Alberta's rating from AA (high) to AA while maintaining a negative outlook for the province."

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan NDP does not support our tax changes. They simply don't get it. They don't look at the literature and the studies, Mr. Speaker. They don't look at the facts. They say they support small business, standing shoulder to shoulder to shoulder, but then they do something completely different. And yesterday, yes, they voted against changing the threshold from 500,000 to 600,000.

Besides tax policy, Mr. Speaker, our government makes strategic investments in entrepreneurship and small business in a number of different areas. Let's talk about Innovation Place at the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Innovation Place is a thriving hub of activity. It is one more place where the Government of Saskatchewan is investing in our small businesses.

On its website it says:

The Saskatoon campus began operations in 1980 and is located adjacent to the University of Saskatchewan.

Innovation Place builds on the University's strengths in agriculture, information technology, and environmental and life sciences, as well as the strengths of nearby federal and provincial agencies.

[Mr. Speaker] Innovation Place is home to 110 tenants, employing over 2,500 people. The technology park includes 20 buildings with 1.3 million square feet of space. A Co-Working Space, offering shared workspace for the tech development community, and Co.Labs, Saskatchewan's first technology incubator, are located in the Concourse building.

Co.Labs is a partnership between Innovation Saskatchewan, Government of Saskatchewan, and Innovation Place. And, Mr. Speaker, Co.Labs is a fantastic opportunity for small tech companies to be nurtured and mentored as they start the entrepreneurship journey. Companies involved in this program have achieved fantastic success. Whether it's 7shifts, TinyEye therapies, or Solido automation, entrepreneurs can now access space, mentorship, programming, and community.

And, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on about the great work the small businesses do in our communities across our province, but I think I'll wrap it up and leave it to some of my other colleagues by making the following motion:

That this Assembly commends the Government of Saskatchewan for extending the small-business rate of 2 per cent from the first \$500,000 of income to the first \$600,000 of income to encourage the growth of small business in our province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon University has moved:

That this Assembly commends the Government of Saskatchewan for extending the small-business rate of 2 per cent from the first \$500,000 of income to the first \$600,000 to encourage the growth of small businesses in our province.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a good day to be able to get up and talk about small business in Saskatchewan, and as an owner of a small business myself, I think it's . . . I'm proud to be part of the entrepreneurial spirit of Saskatchewan. We know that small businesses are creating jobs right, left, and centre. We know, in fact the example that the member gave of a tree trimming company . . . I don't know — the minister from Meadow Lake seems to want to get in on the debate. I hope he's in in the next . . . He has a chance coming up, so hopefully he'll get in on that.

[11:15]

But you know, companies that start maybe as a side business, the guy who worked full-time for the federal government and then he decided he wanted to try get a tree-cutting business going. And he did that, Mr. Speaker, on his own. He figured out how to get clients, how to grow his business, to the point where he now has a company that he's proud of and is a fully participating taxpayer here in Saskatchewan. And I support that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's a great thing and I'm proud of that individual. He's like probably the 12 out of all the 13 companies that are actually small here in Saskatchewan, by the definition that the federal government uses, by the definition used by every other province in Canada.

So what we're talking about today is a definition, Mr. Speaker, because when you look at . . . And these are the numbers that the minister gave in committee the other night. We know that there are 65,000 CCPCs [Canadian-controlled private corporation] here in Saskatchewan. We know that. My company is one of them. And they're working hard to employ people, to raise revenues and, you know, watch the expenses. And make sure the staff are looked after, that they have health care plans and dental plans and all those things that small businesses do. But what's really hurt them the most in the last little while is the budget that this government brought down in March of this year.

And in fact, you know, when we look at concerns about small businesses . . . I'm going to pull out what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had to say about their budget, because that's where the pain is, Mr. Speaker; that's where the pain is. That's where an increase in PST [provincial sales tax] has devastated small businesses here in Saskatchewan. And you never heard that member say one word about the negative impacts that this budget has brought on small businesses in Saskatchewan.

When we're talking small, the definition that we're using is the one the rest of Canada uses — 500,000 in taxable dollar

income. So this is \$500,000 after all the expenses are paid, after all the employees are paid, after all the PST is paid, and after you're not getting a commission anymore for collecting the PST because that was taken away from small businesses in this budget as well.

So what did the CFIB . . . I scanned their thing to see them begging this government to increase that limit that's used as a definition across Canada to those 5,000 companies in Saskatchewan that actually are making \$600,000 in taxable income. So what motivated this? This is what I asked the minister the other night. There was no analysis. There was no tax policy analysis.

Tax is a complicated thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are all sorts of factors that play in. The development of corporate tax over the last 40 years, the development of R & D taxes or exemptions for research and development, the development of a small-business income tax rate — all of those things are a very intricate dance. And if you pull out any tax policy book — I got one out of the library the other day — and I'll tell you, within the first chapter there's a lot of language in there that you have to read several times through — at least I do — because it's very dense and complicated. And I did take a tax law class when I was in school and it was one of the most difficult classes because it's so complicated. And we know that, Mr. Speaker.

So was the CFIB pounding down the door of this government to make this increase and change the definition of small business to expand it to what is clearly medium-size or large businesses, Mr. Speaker, by any measure in Canada? Were they asking for that? Well gee, I looked really hard and I can't find it anywhere in their press release, Mr. Speaker. They talk about getting back to balance in three years, but now we hear from the compassionate Alanna Koch that maybe it's going to be four years because of compassion.

We heard about tax increases. That's what the CFIB was concerned about, Mr. Speaker, was tax increases which this government brought down to the tune of a billion dollars. And here's what they said. They're describing them and then they go on, Marilyn Braun-Pollon went on to say:

"With only seven per cent of entrepreneurs supporting tax hikes to balance the budget [these are these small businesses that they're championing; only 7 per cent supported tax hikes to balance the budget], we are disappointed the government decided to increase taxes by \$908 million. With small business optimism lagging and hiring plans at record lows, we worry this will jeopardize our overall competitiveness," added Braun-Pollon. "As the province's finances improve, we expect government to reduce the PST."

Now she talks about the general corporate income tax rate that was going to be reduced in half point increments to 1 per cent less. Here's what they said about that:

"We certainly welcome this tax relief and understand Saskatchewan will have among the lowest income tax rates in the country, when implemented. However, these changes will be more than muted by the massive tax hikes introduced in this budget," noted Braun-Pollon [which I'm

quoting there].

So, Mr. Speaker, CFIB was asking for lower taxes. They were asking for . . . They applauded the corporate income tax. So what did this government do? They reversed it. They were going to lower corporate income taxes by 1 per cent. Oh, well we're going to reverse that now; we're going back on what we talked about in the budget. And when I asked Finance officials the other night about why all the miscalculations in the mid-year report, they basically said it's because the government keeps changing their mind on implementation. And this is just another example of that.

So to me this is a knee-jerk reaction coming from the politicians that run this government rather than a reasoned tax policy that comes from consulting with experts in the field. When I asked the minister whether she consulted with tax experts, she scoffed and said, basically, well I just talk to people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what people say if you say, do you want lower taxes? Generally 90 per cent of them will say yes. So that's not really sound tax analysis or sound tax policy. If you're going to do something like this, change the definition of what small means. And the minister tried to say that these were small businesses that were marginal. Well I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anybody in this province would look at a company that's making \$600,000 after taxes and call them marginal.

In fact most of the companies that are paying taxes . . . There's only 38,000 of them that are actually paying taxes. There's over 20,000, 27,000 companies that aren't making enough to even pay taxes, Mr. Speaker. So when she's talking marginal, I don't think she's done her homework there, and I really question what people that she is talking to. Because if you're telling me that a company, based on a federal definition that is used across every province and territory in this fine country of ours, is saying, okay, 500 is a good limit to define a small business, and this government says oh, heck no, we know a whole 5,000 other companies that need that extra \$10,000 to do well . . . and they're already making \$600,000 after taxes.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that they're consulting with . . . The former minister would consult with some of his colleagues who are maybe in that tax range. He said as much in committee last year. But really this is not something you can undertake lightly without understanding the impacts. And who is it benefiting? When I asked the minister in committee, well who are these companies? Can you tell me what kind of companies they are? She scoffed at me again, Mr. Speaker, and said why would we want to know that.

Well who are these businesses, Mr. Speaker? Isn't that something that a proper tax analysis should look at and say oh, they're all in one industry maybe? Or maybe they're spread out across different types of industry. Is it the mom-and-pops where the minister or the member opposite buys his pop and his loaf of bread from? Are those the ones that are making \$600,000 after expense money, taxable income? Is it them? We don't know and the minister has absolutely no interest in finding out. That's concerning. And that tells me that this is motivated not by altruism or a love for the small-business sector of Saskatchewan.

We know that the small-business sector is working hard, and they were hurt badly by the budget. And I expect that that is some of the emails that the member opposite is getting as well, is those emails, because we're certainly getting them. And the concern from the small-business sector about the budget completely overwhelms anybody asking for an increase for after-tax income 500 to \$600,000 just because this is a major issue in small-business land. That's not true, Mr. Speaker. We know the issue is that they're suffering because of this budget, because of the horrible changes this government made, the flip-flops they've made, and businesses are having a terrible time of it.

So the NDP supports these businesses, these small businesses, and we certainly do not agree with the member opposite.

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

[Applause]

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that very warm welcome. I am pleased to rise in the Assembly today to discuss and debate this important motion. We can't begin to appreciate this motion without drawing a picture of small business in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, at this stage I won't get into the numbers, but would like to give you a sense of what a small business might look like in your community.

Mr. Speaker, small business is private enterprise at its core. The nature of small business has evolved from the earliest experiences of the trade of meat or grain or trade in tools, followed by trade in weaved items, spices, and spirits. Canada's earliest business ventures were relationships around the trade in agriculture, forest, and fur products.

Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurship takes many forms. It may be an individual entrepreneur, a partnership, or any number of forms of incorporation. In fact it might even include a variety of relationships between individuals, partnerships, and corporations. If we walk down any Saskatchewan street or drive down any grid road, we have no idea what form of business each establishment or yard site operates under.

My father and mother were consummate entrepreneurs. Many members on this side of the House have vast business experience. I have the greatest respect for the people of our province who get up in the morning, risk everything they have every day to enjoy the challenges, work through the hardships, build the relationships, hire, train, and inspire those around them to be the best that they can be every single day. Unlike employees, these are the folks that invest their lives, usually all of their wealth, and their integrity in their venture. They most often do not have benefit plans, and rest assured, they do not have EDOs [earned days off] and leaves of absence. They work through illness and injury, and their days might be 14 to 16 hours long and sometimes seven days a week.

These should be our heroes. These men and women should be the ones with their pictures on our walls because they have built this province and country from day one.

Mr. Speaker, taxation has been a tool used to fund government

initiatives for the last 8,000 years. Evidence of taxation from 6000 BC [before Christ] in Iraq ... And later the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian governments used taxation to fund centralized programs. The tax tools ranged from food products and human services to the earliest forms of currency.

Later the *Stamp Act* of 1765 was the fourth stamp Act to be passed by the Parliament of Great Britain and required all legal documents, permits, commercial contracts, newspapers, wills, pamphlets, and playing cards in the American colonies to carry a tax stamp. The exact date the Act was enacted was November 1st, 1765. That particular Act, you will know, resulted in the colonial protests against British taxation in the United States, which led of course to the American Revolution.

The independent American nation collected taxes on imports, whisky, and for a while even glass windows. States and localities collected poll taxes on voters and property taxes on land and commercial buildings. In 1861 Lincoln introduced the first true income tax, a 3 per cent tax on incomes over \$800 and 5 per cent on incomes over \$10,000, to pay for the Civil War.

Taxation of business has long been a part of the relationship between businesses and its responsibility to the infrastructure of the community in which it might operate. Taxation is simply a tool to facilitate the transfer of moneys from persons to serve the public good. I note for the record that corporations are defined as persons.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, taxation from its earliest iterations has been used to incentive or constrain behaviours by one or more elements of society. And rarely is a tax measure permanent in the sense that the measure may be identified but the rate will often change depending on economic or political circumstance. Our friends opposite would be most familiar with changing tax rates as they increased taxes 21 times in their last period of governance in the province.

It goes without saying that we should all be vigilant when the subject of taxation comes up. This motion is an important one as any movement in taxation has significant consequence and, in this case, opportunity around it. Of course there is diversity of opinion on how tax policy is applied.

[11:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, specific to the motion before us, a tax relief measure aimed at Canadian-controlled private corporations, which are defined as a privately held company, private company, or a closed corporation. The business company is typically owned by relatively small numbers of shareholders or company members and it does not offer to trade its company stock in the public forum but rather the company stock is offered and owned and traded and exchanged privately. By definition it cannot be substantially owned by a non-resident or by a public company.

Small business is defined by our federal government, and therefore the provincial government, as companies that have a tax rate on the first \$500,000, which the province is now extrapolating to increase it to \$600,000. It should be noted that of the 69,000 Saskatchewan corporations that file tax returns, 65,000 are Canadian-controlled private corporations. Seventy

per cent of those earn less than \$100,000 taxable income and about 5,000 earn more than the half a million dollars with another 1,000 near the current threshold. That would leave about 5,000 that will immediately benefit by the increase in the threshold, of which currently about 3,000 earn over 600,000.

My friends opposite often vilify these evil corporations. You will often hear their references to corporate friends, out-of-province corporations, or high-paid consultants, always in a negative context. They refer to wealthy and connected friends, and my colleague spoke eloquently on that subject.

Mr. Speaker, just because someone is successful, just because someone is successful and supports our particular political stripe should not make them public enemy number one. The concept of growing a business from single entrepreneur to a partnership or CCPC is completely lost on members opposite. Perhaps some of the same private corporations grow to be public corporations wherein members opposite will be even more aghast that someone could actually succeed, and they will surely cast aspersion upon them.

Saskatchewan consistently ranks near the top of the nation for business environment, according to the independent organizations like the CFIB. The innuendo inferred by the member opposite as so-called small business, the Leader of the Opposition — so-called small business — Mr. Speaker, what a slap in the face for all of those working people in Saskatchewan.

The member from Saskatoon Nutana in committee the other night suggested that professionals don't employ a lot of employees. I can't begin to imagine where that perspective comes from as virtually every professional I know has a staff of one or more people. And perhaps this is another attempt by the members to cast aspersion on another valued segment of our tax-paying public.

Mr. Speaker, philanthropy has long been a part of our business community, as throughout history businesses have always been a part of building a strong community around themselves. This is not seen as a cost but is generally a commitment to the well-being of the employees and their families as well as the very essence of the communities in which they operate. These small businesses are the ones that hire and train high school and university students. They employ tens of thousands across the province in trades and in retail and service sectors. They employ the pipefitters and welders, the bricklayers and plumbers. These are the businesses that build your home, feed your family, and maybe even cut your hair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they refer to "benefit the wealthiest," I read into that that they are saying, don't succeed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's absolutely shocking, the actions and behaviour and comments by the members opposite. And I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I fully endorse and support the motion made by the member from Saskatoon University. Thank you.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am

pleased to enter this debate today. It's interesting to me. I come from a family of entrepreneurs as well. My parents were small-business people. My sister's a small-business person. My brother is a small-business person, Mr. Speaker. I've many friends who operate a variety of different kinds of small businesses. I represent many folks in Saskatoon Riversdale who have small businesses, Mr. Speaker.

And quite frankly, when you mentioned extending the small-business rate of 2 per cent from the first 500,000 of income to the first 600,000 of income to encourage the growth of small business in the province, frankly the majority of people with whom I've spoken to have pointed out that they're nowhere in that range, Mr. Speaker.

Just because you . . . The big thing in this whole debate, Mr. Speaker, is real and meaningful action to support small businesses, Mr. Speaker — real and meaningful action to support small businesses. I know that while the CFIB . . . My colleague from Saskatoon Nutana just pointed out how the CFIB felt about this government's provincial budget, particularly around the PST increase, Mr. Speaker. Adding PST to, adding previously exempt items to no longer being exempt — construction services, Mr. Speaker, and insurance services — impacts small, small businesses . . . small businesses. I'm not sure why my s's aren't working here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A constituent of mine who is a contractor, actually, I had a conversation with her and this is just a response that she gave to me around this particular change. She's an electrician and a contractor, and she says:

PST is a definite problem. Not only does it take money directly out of my pocket on dollars earned, but it affects the ability to win contracts in the first place, [adding that] 6 per cent an invoice can be very prohibitive to some of my lower income or more frugal clients, can mean the client's overall budget is smaller to accommodate the extra taxation, which means I earn less but I am taxed more.

Some small companies are absorbing the cost of the PST so they are more competitive. I'm not interested in reducing the cost of my labour so the government can spend more with the same impunity they have thus far. I'm not sure what the new bill will do to help me. My guess is nothing, as I don't operate in that income bracket. But removing the PST on my services would put money in my pocket for sure [Mr. Speaker].

I spoke with a café owner, a very successful café owner in Saskatoon who makes a decent living and provides a great service and a great product to people in Saskatoon. Her taxable income is less than 200,000, Mr. Speaker. This is someone who goes full out, Mr. Speaker. We support, fully, small businesses, Mr. Speaker.

I've had the privilege in my life, most of my first . . . Well all of my first jobs actually were for small-business people. I worked in a laundromat. I worked at the Manhattan Ballroom in Saskatoon. I worked in a chocolate shop, the first Belgian chocolate shop and a cappuccino place in Saskatoon, Glad's Chocolatier, many years ago. I saw exactly what small-business

people do. Well in my own family, as I said, my parents — the work, the number of hours that are put in, the commitments, the taking of risk to do what you love but to provide a service or a product to people, Mr. Speaker.

But this is about tax policy that has a positive impact on the largest number of people possible. So this change will impact 1 of 13 businesses, Mr. Speaker. The other 12 get nothing from this, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I'd argue they get less than nothing because of the PST changes, Mr. Speaker. In fact they are being hurt by this government's policies. I completely agree with my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana who talks about tax, this not being a reasoned decision. I believe in evidence-based policy and having as much information . . . And admittedly tax policy is not my area of expertise. And I actually don't think it's most of ours so that's why we consult experts and do a thoughtful and meaningful process, Mr. Speaker. The minister in committee couldn't answer many of my colleague's questions on who this was going to impact, how many jobs it was going to create.

And so coming from a government who less than a year ago implemented serious changes that had a negative impact on small businesses, this is coming from a government who just recently put in place negative changes, increasing PST and adding it to things like construction services, insurance, restaurant meals. We're seeing the effect of that. Here in Saskatchewan there are 1,900 fewer people working in the food services industry, Mr. Speaker. Those are people, those are small businesses providing jobs and making a living and doing what they love, Mr. Speaker, and this government is hurting them.

When it comes to insurance premiums, PST on insurance premiums, you talk to small businesses who want to do something for their employees and be the best possible employers. Adding 6 per cent on insurance premiums has been very impactful. You think about, so who's going to pay that 6 per cent? Does it go on the back of the employee? Does it go on the back of the employer? And if they choose . . . So that extra 6 per cent means that someone has to suck that up in either their income or their profit or they provide fewer health services. And quite frankly as the Health critic, I know that we already do . . . This will have an impact on people receiving things like dental services and have a ripple-down effect, Mr. Speaker, or a trickle-down effect in not a positive way.

So if this government was really serious about supporting small businesses, they would be putting money back into the pockets of the most number of people. I haven't even touched on action, Mr. Speaker. The reality is when people have money to spend, they spend it in small businesses. I know when people in my constituency have money, they spend it. And those people who are on the margins who aren't high-income earners, who are lower or medium-income earners, spend all their money in our province, Mr. Speaker. They're not going farther afield. They're spending every dollar they have here in their respective communities and in their province.

So charging PST on things like children's clothing, Mr. Speaker, is an issue. You know the PST on insurance, I've had lots of people come into my office, seniors actually, who want to purchase health insurance to ensure that they have that

ambulance ride covered or partially covered, or to make sure that they have the necessary therapies. And that takes money out of their pockets, that 6 per cent. That 6 per cent, Mr. Speaker, when you're on a fixed income as a senior, has a huge impact on your disposable income, and that means you can't support those small businesses that you'd like to.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite, one of the members who is running for leadership actually, thinks that this should be a more thoughtful process actually. I'm just taking a quote from the minister of . . . He's no longer the minister. My apologies, the member from Willowgrove, the member from Willowgrove. I should know my colleagues' constituencies, but when we've referred to them as ministers sometimes we forget that. Mr. Speaker, he has said in his own suggestion, if he becomes the premier he will have a tax review panel. He says:

My constituents have told me, and more recently throughout my leadership campaign, the people of Saskatchewan have voiced their concerns about these recent changes. We must undertake a more thorough review of some of the recent sales tax policy changes. Having listened to many presentations, I am convinced that the current approach may not raise the revenues expected within the budget and that there are more effective alternatives to be considered.

Wise words, Mr. Speaker. A more considered approach to tax policy, to think about how we put money in people's pockets so they can spend in small businesses and to provide actual relief for the 12 other small-business people out of the 13 who aren't benefiting from this change, Mr. Speaker, this should be something that the government shouldn't have written down on the back of a napkin and decided that this is the way to go, Mr. Speaker. This should have involved research, and perhaps taking this member who is running for leadership, his approach, that perhaps this needs a broader look to think about how we better support small businesses here in Saskatchewan.

But make no mistake, people on this side of the House know full well the importance of small business in the province. They are the generators of income or jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker. The PST, Mr. Speaker, is a huge problem. This government should have taken the time and instead of implementing a change that will support one business out of every 13, they should have thought about the other 12, Mr. Speaker. And with that, I will not be supporting this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

[11:45]

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't understand why that party on that side is so against business. Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. The thing about business is it's the spine of our economy; it's the spine of our society. And yet that party votes against it and is against business. They think that business is bad. Business is good. They consider that if you're in business, you're ripping off the people. If you're in business, you're treating your employees wrong. If you're in business, you're making lots of money. That's not true. Business is what creates economies in our

province, and we need business. Business is good.

Small business accounts for 98 per cent of business in Saskatchewan and drives a large part of our province's economic activity. Our government recognizes and appreciates the huge contribution that small-business owners make to Saskatchewan.

The NDP voted against these measures and against small-business owners. In fact the member from Saskatoon Nutana claims that small businesses do not earn \$600,000 a year in taxable income. Well, Mr. Speaker, the CFIB, the voice of small business, have asked our government to increase the small-business threshold, and they've asked this since 2008. So, Mr. Speaker, this is something that they've recommended, they've asked for, and we are in the process of doing.

In reality it's an easy equation, Mr. Speaker: you create a competitive tax system that will support small business and it will attract business. Business is good. Business attracts investment. By starting a business, you're either renting a property or you're building a property, so you're creating activity. You're hiring people. Those people are building homes, homes with fences and gardens and all the extras that comply to additional businesses. In fact the member from Saskatoon University kind of explained how one business will lead to another and to another and to another.

So when you get people starting a business, they hire people. Those people purchase vehicles. They purchase food and clothing. They start families. They have kids in school and into extracurricular activities like sports and hockey and soccer and baseball. They'll develop cultural with music lessons and Scouts and Guides. These all create an economy and they create communities. Then they start doing volunteers for their communities, organizing on boards and coaching teams voluntarily, leaders in gymnastics and Guides. They're building a community, and it's all because there's a business sector there that is creating all this. There's rinks built to accommodate the community. There's churches. There's community clubs like Kinsmen and Rotary and Lions. There's sports teams developed. It's all part of a community because you've got an active business sector. All this because someone had invested in an idea to create a business in a community.

We support businesses. Businesses create a tax base. Businesses pay property tax, business tax, corporate taxes. They hire employees, and those employees have personal income tax and consumption taxes, creating a strong base economy. And with that strong base economy, you build communities to invest in infrastructure thereby employing more people. You build schools, roads and sidewalks, and hospitals and care homes, and daycares. Even garbage pickup and recycling is all part of a community built and employing people because business is supporting the community. Mr. Speaker, business is good.

Back in '08 and '09, we recognized the need, and we lowered the property taxes. That helped. We're standing up against the carbon tax. What a useless piece of legislation that is, is the carbon tax. It does nothing to reduce carbon. It just takes money from people. If it was going into investment and to research and development, I could see it. But it's none of that. It's just a carbon tax, a tax on the people. We've voiced our opposition to

the unfair federal tax charged against businesses. And we've created an attractive business climate. When you create an attractive business climate, business will follow. It'll grow and flourish, and it'll continue to build economies. Mr. Speaker, business is good.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I'll be attending the Saskatchewan Polytechnic business and industrial banquet in Moose Jaw. There's four of them in the province and the Moose Jaw one is generally the biggest one of the four centres. And Saskatchewan Polytechnic is tuned into the business sector to develop workforce to support Saskatchewan businesses. There are over 100 programs offered through Sask Polytechnic in support of business, courses like construction, electrical, automotive, business, finances, just to name a few. Sask Polytech supports business and we support Sask Polytechnic.

Since 2007 our government has committed to create and maintain a favourable business climate. One of the building blocks of any community is a thriving business sector. Our competitive tax structure offers credits for research and development. We've created a red tape committee, a regulatory modernization and accountability Act to reduce red tape to remove barriers to growth.

And, Mr. Speaker, last month we celebrated Small Business Week. It was a time to highlight how small business has a rather big impact on our province. Those businesses with fewer than 50 employees account for almost 99 per cent of all the business in the province. Last year small business contributed nearly one-third of the province's GDP, employed almost one-third of the province's workers, and paid over \$6.2 billion in wages and salaries.

Small businesses are active in almost every sector of our economy. They grow our economy. They create business. They encourage investment. They are a vital part of the community with employment, with sponsorship, with volunteers, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life that we all enjoy. You might say, in Saskatchewan, small business really is big business. It's the heart of Saskatchewan's economy is small business.

We need small business, and we support small business. That's what the extending of the 2 per cent rate from 500,000 to 600,000 will do. It will attract and it will grow our business economy. You know, Mr. Speaker, we appreciate those businesses that have developed well and produce Saskatchewan products and promote our productivity and export throughout the world. We further appreciate their business entrepreneurial spirit that has helped build our province.

Saskatchewan people are resourceful and innovative. We appreciate the business community — businesses like Morris Industries, like Degelman, like Bourgault, Doepker, and Brandt, and Honey Bee, Frontier. These aren't going to be part of that group that will receive the increase in the rate. But they are all businesses that started as small businesses, and they rely on other small businesses to serve them. So, Mr. Speaker, that's why the small business is so important.

When I think of all the things that the business has done for this province in attracting and creating and building and evolving

... Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to be said, and I'm obviously going to be running out of time. But when I think of organizations like STEP that has helped to increase the target to the exports and the management of small businesses, when I think of even the Global Transportation Hub, which is something I will defend very harshly because I think it's something that's very central to the economic development of our province and the growth of the province as we go further.

Mr. Speaker, there's lots more that I can say and a lot to this, but I just want to reiterate how good it is to have a province that recognizes the value of business and the value of small business. And I support the motion that was made by my colleague from Saskatoon University. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm really proud today to participate in this debate with regards to Bill 84. And, Mr. Speaker, of course we all support small businesses. Small businesses create about 80 per cent of all of our new jobs across our province and they grow our economy. And we want to commit and support to all small businesses in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I've been going to communities and talking to municipal leaders across this province, they've told me about how businesses are struggling in their communities and they're closing their doors because of the deceitful cuts that this government made in their previous budget. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to think about all these businesses that are struggling, not just a few businesses in this province, and we've got to think about people who are contributing to our whole province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've got to take into account the increase in the PST and how that had a big impact on businesses. Taking the exemption off has affected many, many businesses, increasing that 1 per cent and the insurance. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that insurance PST has been huge and lots of companies have talked to me about how that can make or break their business.

So it really concerns me when we have a government here that talks about how they're not going to help the cattle farmers that were impacted by the fires. The municipalities are struggling with the cuts-in-lieu, and we see that the municipalities are going to be needing to increase their taxes as well.

So we look at these small businesses. The PST has increased. The exemption has been taken off. Their businesses have gone down because families are struggling with these increases as well and the cost that it is for them to participate going to these businesses. And then the educational taxes have also gone up with this. And there's only one taxpayer, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we've got to keep that in mind as well. So when families are making less and therefore spending less, that impacts small businesses and we've got to keep that in mind when we're making decisions here.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what really kind of concerns me is that there really was very little information provided by the

minister when she was asked questions with regards to the consultation of stakeholders with regards to this bill. She didn't have a real clear example of who she consulted with. She said, "people." Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that doesn't give us a good example of which stakeholders were consulted and no information on exactly how many jobs this is going to create, if any. Will this create jobs? We know our unemployment rate is extreme in this province and I know in Prince Albert and in the North especially. And so how much is this going to contribute to increasing employment? And how will this address the high unemployment rates? And who exactly has been asking for this? We've gotten no answers with regards to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I know that all the businesses in this province have been asking for support from this government and the municipal governments have been asking for support from this government because they've been impacted by millions of dollars taken from their budgets. So we see that in Saskatoon, their taxes are going to be going up almost 5 per cent. Regina, taxes are going up. Prince Albert, taxes are going up. That's all because of this government and their mismanagement with regards to the budget that they laid down and the millions of dollars they took away from our municipalities.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also were wondering how many caucus members will be benefiting from this, the passing of this bill. So we know this spring while the Finance minister was talking about tax changes he said, and I'll quote. I think this is important that we put this in *Hansard* because ... I'll quote this:

You could have a small business making \$600,000 in taxable income, and there are a lot of them in this province. I dare say I've got some colleagues in my caucus, caucus colleagues that run some of these businesses.

So how many? How many of those people are benefiting, and is that why they're focusing on these businesses? We need to represent all of Saskatchewan, not just our own personal interests. And sometimes I get concerned about if personal interests are being served here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an odd thing for the Finance minister to say that using his caucus colleagues as those business owners that could potentially benefit from these changes. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that to me is very concerning.

[12:00]

And I find it also very interesting that this motion was brought forward by the member of Saskatoon University, a well-known, key supporter for the leadership candidate, the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove. And we know that that leadership candidate has indicated that he's not very happy with the tax increases that this government has been implementing, and he's been very vocal with that as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so he indicated that he wants to reopen the provincial sales tax debate if he's chosen as the next leader of the party. But not only just the provincial sales tax he wants to look into, he plans to appoint a tax review panel on his very first day as leader. So the panel would be given a 60-day window to consult with

stakeholders and the public. And he quotes:

“(The panel) will have the time to look at what other provinces are doing, coordinate where we can, and have a very in depth discussion with financial planners, with life insurance sales people.”

Well I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's really refreshing to hear that someone wants to talk with stakeholders when they're talking about making changes within government.

So the panel would be made up of tax-policy experts. And so that sounds like a little bit more definition than saying just “people” like our Minister of Finance says. It says that the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove hopes to review all aspects of taxation policy and rates in Saskatchewan. I'll repeat that just in case nobody heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove, the leadership candidate, hopes to review all aspects of taxation policy and rates in Saskatchewan.

So not only this side of the House were concerned about how decisions are being made. It sounds like there are other members here as well that are a little bit concerned about how these decisions are being made.

And so with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's really important to say again that we all are concerned about small businesses in our province, all of them. And we want to help all of them that are being hurt by the Sask Party.

But we've got to take in mind the impact that the PST hikes have had on small businesses. And it hasn't only impacted the most richest businesses; it's impacted all businesses and we need to really take that into account.

So I think that government shouldn't just be playing politics with regards to making these decisions. Decisions should be made on the best interests of all businesses in this province and they should be made by doing fact-based, evidence-based decision making, asking stakeholders within the community what they believe should be happening and what would help them with regards to their business, and not just consulting with your caucus colleagues and said, what's best for your business. You've got to talk to everybody in Saskatchewan and ask what will help with their businesses — all small businesses and not just a few within this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So with that, I cannot support this motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for debate has expired. Questions. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In terms of the debate that's taking place here today, it of course follows on a budget that was disastrous for families and small businesses that now these members are proclaiming an interest in. And at the time, CFIB of course had a lot of very damning things to say about the budget, Mr. Speaker. And it would appear that, you know, they made their play yesterday which was related to the motion here today, so you'd think it would be interesting to hear what the CFIB has to say.

And you know, there's a release that comes just this very

morning, Mr. Speaker, where it's entitled, from the CFIB of course, where it's entitled “Sask small business optimism remains low in November; almost 1 in 4 businesses planning layoffs.” This comes in the wake of what these members have done, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon University: how does it make any sense?

The Deputy Speaker: — I think there was a question there, so I'll recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

Mr. Olason: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Definitely it was a very tough budget this March, Mr. Speaker. We had to make a number of tough decisions that affected a lot of people, affected a lot of business, affected a lot of families, affected a lot of people all over the province.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative, this policy that we made yesterday, introduced yesterday and voted on yesterday, Mr. Speaker . . . The NDP, from the March budget till today, till yesterday and today, have been calling on us for tax relief, calling on us to not cut the corporate rate of income tax from 12 to 11 per cent. Over and over and over we heard that. Mr. Speaker, we are keeping that income tax rate, the corporate tax rate, at 12 per cent and we're incenting business to grow, invest in our economy, and hire more people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2014 current federal NDP MP Erin Weir wrote in an article in which he slandered small business and went as far to call them, and I quote, I quote, “the cult of small business.” More recently, he referred to small business as tax havens and small business owners as tax evaders. It seems that the federal NDP party does not really appreciate small business.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. How can you support a Saskatchewan NDP MP who attacks our province's small business?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask that former Finance minister how he was able to support a PST increase, Mr. Speaker? Those folks over there are bickering about it not being . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how they think over there that adding PST to construction services, to restaurant meals, support small businesses? That's the real issue at hand right now, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I didn't get much of an answer from the member from Saskatoon University, so I'll try it again, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the PST increase and expansion that went on in the last budget and in terms of expanding it to things like insurance, that's something that we hear about from small businesses having a negative impact on their bottom line, not the measure that was

introduced yesterday. So it makes sense that the CFIB today comes out and makes no reference to the measure taken by this government because the real problem is for the small businesses that are out on the margins right now, Mr. Speaker, due in part to the cost increases passed on along to them by that government.

So to the member from Saskatoon University: why don't they try to fix the insurance increase on the expansion of PST to insurance instead of something else? Why don't they do what they said they were going to do in their leadership campaign?

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

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll say it again. We had a tough budget in March. We had some tough decisions to make. But I think it's important also to remember, Mr. Speaker, we still, even with the increase, still have the lowest PST rate of any province with a provincial sales tax. Even with the PST increase, every Saskatchewan resident will be paying significant less in income tax and PST combined than they did in 2007 under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, it's rich. The NDP is yelling and making remarks about a 1 per cent increase in the PST that went up to 6 per cent. I'll tell you what really hurt, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what really hurt, Mr. Speaker — not a 1 per cent increase, but the 9 per cent PST that we had under the NDP.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coalition for Tax Fairness, a group that directly attacks private corporations and lobbies the federal government to raise their taxes, Mr. Speaker, guess who is a signed-on supporter? The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, whose president is Larry Hubich, who also sits on the NDP executive. Other signatories include the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which the NDP quote from regularly, and the Broadbent Institute, which is an NDP proxy organization that members opposite belong to.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Nutana. How can you get elected to this Chamber, refuse to actually say what you believe, then let your proxies do the dirty work?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear you acknowledge me, so I . . . Thank you. There's too . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Wow. There's a lot of anger over there right now, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what's going on.

What I say to the member from Carrot River Valley is this. On the day after they introduced this bill or passed a bill that was apparently lauded by the CFIB, what does the CFIB news release say? What is the headline? "Sask small business optimism remains low in November; almost 1 in 4 businesses planning layoffs."

So that is the CFIB's response to a bill that they told us was begged for by the CFIB since 2008, Mr. Speaker? That shows how completely out of touch they are. And the CFIB is concerned about the PST hikes. They're concerned about the health insurance that these small businesses are trying to provide to their own employees. That's what they're concerned about.

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

Mr. McCall: — Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the member from Saskatoon University: does he want to take this opportunity to apologize on behalf of that government for the budget that they passed in the spring which has had such a disastrous impact on our economy? And you know, up and to the point where CFIB, in the wake of this big announcement that they heralded yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in the wake of that announcement, they released the November numbers where one in four small businesses is planning on layoffs, Mr. Speaker.

Does the member from Saskatoon University want to take this opportunity to apologize for that budget and to apologize to those workers that are going to get laid off?

The Deputy Speaker: — Before I recognize the member from Saskatoon University, it's getting a little . . . The volume is getting a little up there, so perhaps the members could dial it back on both sides of the House. I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

Mr. Olason: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you one thing. We had tough decisions to make in March and we made them. We've got a plan to get back to balance after three years and we're going to continue down that path.

I find it really, really ironic that the member would ask that question. I'll tell you what was devastating, Mr. Speaker: 16 years of NDP rule where they raised taxes 21 times, 21 times in 16 years; a 9 per cent sales tax, Mr. Speaker; businesses leaving our province, one after the other after the other; our young people leaving the province over and over and over. The number one gift for high school graduates, Mr. Speaker — luggage. People were leaving, businesses were leaving, money was leaving. That was devastating. They should be the ones apologizing.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Dennis: — Mr. Speaker, in committee on Tuesday the member from Nutana said, "I'm thinking of professional corporations like lawyers or physicians or surgeons who do not typically have a lot of employees." Since she is endorsing the member from Meewasin, maybe she should ask . . . The medical corporation employs a lot of people. Maybe she should ask all the members of CUPE Local 974 of Saskatoon Community Clinic if the member from Meewasin had a lot of employees.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote: do you think it's fair that the member from Nutana would pick and choose which small business should get

a threshold increase based solely on her personal assessment of businesses?

The Deputy Speaker: — The time has expired for the 75-minute debate. We will move on to private members' public bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 605

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Ms. Sarauer that **Bill No. 605 — *The Saskatchewan Employment (Support for Survivors of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today on this very important bill that's before us. It's a shameful situation we find ourselves here in Saskatchewan with having one of the worst records in Canada in terms of domestic violence. And I know both sides of the House are deeply committed to ending this and that we can do more. And we all are committed to that.

[12:15]

And of course this Bill No. 605, *An Act to Provide Support to Survivors of Domestic Violence* is one tool in a tool box that I think we need to get right to work on and end this scourge that we have that plagues our province in such high numbers and really is one that we hate to see happen. And we hate to see the causes and we need to do so much more in this.

So I'm going to speak for a few minutes on this topic this morning and urge members to take a look at Bill No. 605, *An Act to Provide Support to Survivors of Domestic Violence*. And I want to thank our leader for bringing this forward. This is the third time she has done that and we hope this time that we can get to a vote and actually pass this.

And as I said it can be one of the many pieces of supports that we can offer predominately women, but anyone who is suffering from intimate partner violence. This is one that we feel is, in our day and age, that we have a situation that arises where there is such a thing as domestic violence. We need to rise to our best and do what we can and take a look across Canada to take a look at what are the best practices. What are governments and legislatures finding to be those best practices and what can we do to make sure this can come about?

And there has been an awful lot of work done in this area. And I want to congratulate PATHS [Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan], the provincial association for transition housing, for their leadership in this area. And they have really been active in this area.

I also want to thank the SFL, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour — Lori Johb particularly for her leadership, but there are many within their organization who have stepped up.

And the Canadian Labour Congress, particularly because this is something that's been seen across Canada as a priority item for us to tackle. Because we know that interestingly and importantly that people who are caught in the situation of domestic violence often see the workplace as a one safe place where they can be and one place where they can get some support from their co-workers.

But we need to go beyond that because we know that people who are experiencing this and suffering from domestic violence need that support of that job. They need that income to make sure that if they are fleeing a domestic violence situation that we have done some work here. And we were glad to see the government take up part of the bill that the leader had sponsored in terms of issues around rental lease agreements and that type of thing. But we need to go even further and we need to see some more action in that area.

I want to particularly thank . . . And how I got involved, and I appreciate the leader talking about how this, is a bit of a hybrid between Labour and Justice. Because how I got involved was with SEIU-West [Service Employees International Union-West], the young workers. And it's great to see young people stepping up and saying these are the issues that our colleagues, our friends are experiencing in the workplace. What can we do about this? And it was a young woman who brought this forward to me, and that's how I brought it forward to the leader who was actually doing a lot of work on this already.

And so it just seemed to be a natural that we fit together and say, hey listen, can we make this work? And the SFL and the CLC [Canadian Labour Congress] really stepped up to want to join the movement that's happening right across the province that's demanding action, that's demanding a response from us, the legislators in this province. And so this is very important for us to do. And so this is very, very important.

But it's not only PATHS and the community groups. And I want to talk about the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] here in Regina, also in Saskatoon. Many community groups and the universities who've studied, or are studying this issue, but also business communities, business groups are stepping up.

We had a very, very good meeting with the chamber of commerce who've really come to understand the importance of this. And while we continue to have conversations with them about this particular issue, they have talked about the importance of education and training and they in fact have released a statement to that effect. And if we have time we'll get to that, Mr. Speaker. But I know there is so much research in this area that's so critical that helps us understand what we can do.

But what I wanted to do is just take a moment to reflect on Bill No. 605, *An Act to Provide Support to Survivors of Domestic Violence*. The preamble, and I think it's important for people who are watching or who are tuning in today and for us all to reflect on this: "... Saskatchewan has the highest rate of

domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces.” And that is something that none of us here want to see continue. We must do something about that issue. And we know that “. . . citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned at the lack of support for survivors of domestic violence.”

It seems common sense that there are supports out there, but how do we do that? And of course no one organization can solve the problem. It's upon all of us, and whether it's in our business community, our church groups, our community groups, the legislature, we need to have a whole tool kit of tools that say, here are things that can help you flee that domestic situation, that you will get support. You will get housing. You will be able to maintain your job and actually get support in that situation. And we also know that Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta, and other provinces have enacted progressive and supportive legislation that supports survivors that are escaping circumstances of domestic violence.

So the bill talks about the definitions of domestic violence, and I think we're pretty aware of that, and the impact of PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] and those types of things. And the bill really calls for leave of up to 10 days which the employee may choose to take intermittently or one continuous period, and a leave of up to 17 weeks in one continuous period. Now what we want to . . . And it talks about purposes of which the domestic violence may be taken leave for. And it's of course medical attention which is a real priority; obtaining services from victim service organizations to obtain psychological or other professional counselling; or to relocate temporarily or permanently — and in terms of housing that's hugely important — and to seek legal or law enforcement assistance, including preparing for participating in any civil or criminal legal proceedings that are related to or resulting from domestic violence.

Now the 10 days, it's really important we understand that five of those days are paid leave. With those paid leave, that can be taken from sick leave if the place of employment provides paid sick leave. And so we think this is a reasonable, reasonable, request. We think this shouldn't be too onerous. We understand that, from what we hear from the Canadian Labour Congress, that people who are in this situation usually take one or two days. It's not that they take the whole five days. It's not a situation where people want to be away. In fact they want to be at work. They want to be with their colleagues. They want life to continue as much as they can in normalcy. But if they need to be away, they certainly have that support.

We understand this can be difficult for places that don't provide sick leave. And of course that's another issue, workplaces that don't provide any sick leave. But we think that this is one that we think is critically, critically important for the person but also for the family. I mean many times children are involved in this sort of situation and it makes it very, very difficult. This may be something that'd be related to schools and that type of situation. So we want to make sure that if we can keep the situation as whole as possible and ensure that people, when they are leaving domestic violence, a situation of domestic violence, that they have that support.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that there has been some outstanding research done by PATHS, right from a simple

pictograph to a full report. And as well I was very pleased to say that I saw this Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce policy statement on interpersonal violence in the workplace and the employer's role. I was so happy to see them step up. And they released this just a few weeks ago as well, talking about it's a very serious issue in Saskatchewan, that all citizens in the province have a shared responsibility to address, and while one incident of interpersonal violence in the workplace is too many, the fact that Saskatchewan has the highest rates of police-reported domestic violence for both males and females in Canada is totally unacceptable and action needs to be taken. And they also acknowledge that such deep-rooted societal problems require immediate action from all parties — governments, employers and employees. So this is very important. And as I said, they would like to see an education role. That's very important.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members, I would urge all members to become familiar with the chamber of commerce report, become familiar with the work of PATHS, and I would say when we get a chance to vote on this, let's support Bill 605. Let's make sure we send a strong message to the people of Saskatchewan that we're there for the people who are stuck in this situation. We think this is all, all important. The leader called this as one part of the puzzle, a small part of the puzzle, but I think it's critical that we pay attention to that.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn Bill No. 605, *An Act to Provide Support for Survivors of Domestic Violence*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 605, *The Saskatchewan Employment (Support for Survivors of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader and look forward to what he has to say.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You could be surprised. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:27.]

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