



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

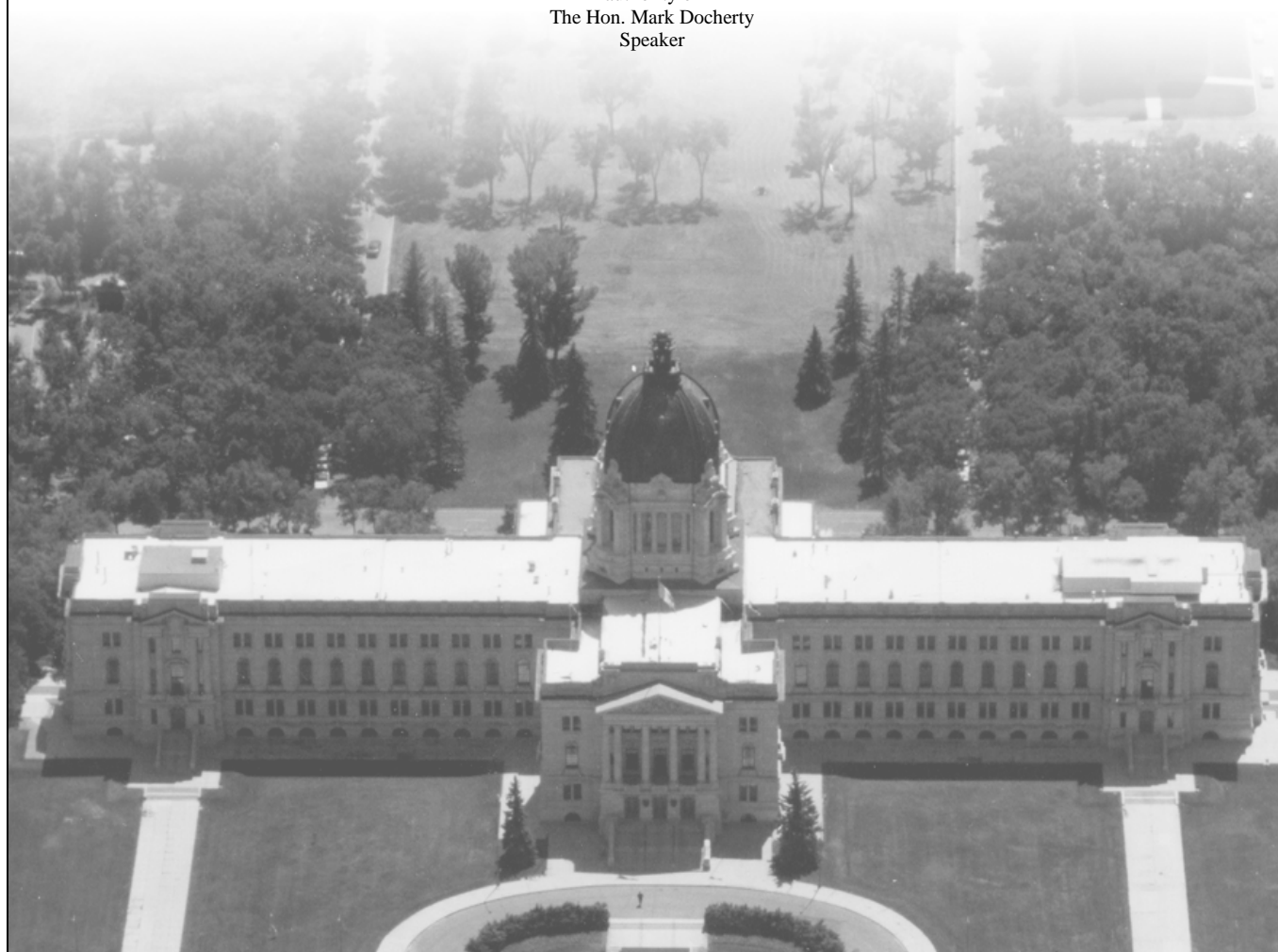
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 28th Legislature

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Vacant — Regina Northeast

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Vacant — 1

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery, I would like to introduce Robin Dunlop, a friend of mine, and certainly a friend of the constituency of Stonebridge-Dakota in Saskatoon, where most recently she served as volunteer campaign Chair.

Robin has been a successful business owner and entrepreneur for 14 years. She also served as Chair of the Saskatchewan Hearing Health Conference, which attracted audiologists and practitioners from across Western Canada. Previously she was also principal speech writer to Premier Devine and gained a strong reputation for her keen understanding of Saskatchewan's political history. Robin currently serves on the board of directors for the Meewasin Valley Authority.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in welcoming Robin to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to introduce, seated in your gallery, Barb Wright. Barb is one of the constituency assistants for the constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove. She's had a distinguished career as a teacher in our province, some 30 years beginning in Moose Jaw and then in Saskatoon at Greystone Heights, Mayfair, and Silverwood Heights.

When I talked to Barb, she reminds me when she was a teacher one of the highlights of her year was coming to the legislature with each and every group. We hope that it still remains a highlight as you see what goes on today, but most importantly we want to thank you for your service as a teacher and now as a constituency assistant, and welcome you to your Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to help me welcome Barb Wright.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, in the west gallery, a 37-year retired public servant for the Ministry of the Environment, served different areas across the province, current Meadow Lake city councillor, volunteer in our community, member of the Saskatchewan Party provincial executive, and a friend to many on this side of the House and the opposite side as well. And it's my dad, Tom Harrison, who is joining us today from Meadow Lake. So welcome to your Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Porcupine Plain, Mistatim, and Bjorkdale, and I do so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens as it relates to the Sask Party's cuts to post-secondary education. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

These petitions are signed by concerned citizens from Moose Jaw and Mortlach. I so submit.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to stop the cuts to our children's classrooms. Those who've signed this petition today wish to draw our attention to the following: to the fact that this government took in an additional \$67 million in education property tax last budget year but saw fit to cut \$54 million from our children's classrooms. And of course, Mr. Speaker, these cuts have had a devastating impact across the province. We've seen cuts to specialized pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs and cuts to classrooms in every corner of this province. So 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 in our education system pay for this government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Moose Jaw, in Caronport, and in Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from the people of Saskatchewan calling on the government to appoint a seniors' advocate, Mr. Speaker. They point out that seniors' concerns under this government have not been a priority. They point to things like the cuts to the hearing aid plan, to podiatry services, to shuttering STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], of increased prescriptions, the increase to long-term care.

People have huge concerns that seniors are not a priority of this government, Mr. Speaker. The fact that Saskatchewan does not have legislated minimum care standards for long-term care and, even with continued reports and concerns for families on the issues in long-term care, this government has failed to ensure safety, quality of life, and dignity for seniors. And the petitioners believe a seniors' advocate would provide vital support for seniors and their families across the province. And, 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 call on the Saskatchewan Party government to immediately appoint a seniors' advocate to ensure the rights of seniors are upheld and that all seniors across the province have the supports they need and deserve.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Yom HaShoah

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to Yom HaShoah or Holocaust Remembrance Day, which will be observed on April 12th this year. Yom HaShoah is a day on which we reflect back on the atrocities of the Holocaust and remember the victims and countless acts of heroism that took place during the Holocaust.

In Saskatoon, I was humbled to attend the 2018 Holocaust memorial service on March 18th at the Sanctuary of Jewish Community Centre sponsored by the Congregation Agudas Israel, along with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education.

Robbie Waisman, a Holocaust survivor, gave a powerful keynote address. He told the story of tragedy and survival which highlighted the importance of remembering what happened during the Holocaust so that we may never allow such horrors to occur again. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Waisman spoke to 2,000 Saskatoon students on Thursday about the Holocaust. Mr. Speaker, with each passing year, we have fewer and fewer survivors of the Holocaust alive to tell their story, which is why it is so important that everyone here in Saskatchewan and around the world take time to remember the victims of the Holocaust.

I ask that all members join me in observing Yom HaShoah on April 12th in remembering the victims of the Holocaust and to

take action to ensure that the victims' stories will never be forgotten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Trade Legislative Conference

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this weekend I had the pleasure of attending, along with the members from Cannington, Last Mountain-Touchwood, and Saskatoon Fairview, the International Trade Legislative Conference in Quebec City. This conference brought together representatives from across North America to discuss the concern upon renegotiation or the potential cancellation of the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] agreement.

NAFTA is incredibly important to our province and our country, accounting for 56 per cent of Saskatchewan's exports. Millions of jobs are created thanks to this agreement, including nine million in Canada, five million in Mexico, and 14 million in the United States. But after more than 20 years, it's important to revisit NAFTA to update and modernize the agreement and build upon the success we have already enjoyed across all three countries.

Mr. Speaker, the conference was to provide a forum for legislators to discuss any issues and ensure that a modernized agreement will have a positive impact on our provinces and states. Saskatchewan is an export-dependent province, and our government will continue to support policies and agreements that help our industries.

This conference was an important step to learning more about a modernized NAFTA, and we will continue to work with our trading partners to the south and to provide the best arrangements for our Saskatchewan businesses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Social Work Week

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and to recognize this week, March 18th to the 24th, as Social Work Week in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this year's theme for Social Work Week is Bringing Change to Life.

As a registered social worker, I am proud of the work my colleagues perform every day across the province. I know first-hand the dedication and compassion of Saskatchewan's social workers. They provide essential supports to families, adults, and children, as well as important services ranging from crisis intervention, one-on-one counselling, group counselling, marriage and family therapy, addictions counselling, and child protection.

Mr. Speaker, right now many social workers are operating under difficult circumstances due to the callous cuts of this government. Saskatchewan social workers are already dealing with increased workloads, which would be made worse if there are more public service cuts in this upcoming budget.

The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers governs the profession of social work in the province. The member-based organization was first established in October 1962 and has grown from an active membership of 83 to more than 1,800 registered members.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in expressing our gratitude to social workers across Saskatchewan during this week and commend them on the work they do every day to improving people's lives in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Z99 Radiothon

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this weekend marked Z99's annual radiothon. For 31 years the Z99 morning crew has stayed up for over 36 straight hours to raise money for the Hospitals of Regina Foundation in support of the neonatal intensive care unit at the Regina General Hospital. This year the radiothon raised over \$700,000.

Mr. Speaker, the neonatal intensive care unit, also known as NICU, has been a crucial resource in Regina for the past 40 years. Approximately 600 babies every year are treated. Throughout the fundraiser, people from across the province shared stories of the important role that the NICU unit has played in their lives.

Inspiring stories of fundraising efforts were also shared, Mr. Speaker, stories like Tiara Schneider's, who used the NICU unit when her son Brooks was born premature. She held a fundraising event over the weekend, promising to make a hat for every NICU baby for every \$20 donated. She ended up raising over \$7,000. That's the commitment that people make in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the millions raised over by Z99 radiothon over the past 31 years have made a significant impact on the quality of lives and care for these mothers and their newborns. On behalf of everyone in this Assembly, I'd like to thank the Z99 team for their hard work on this fundraising, and for everyone in Saskatchewan who donated to this, such a worthwhile cause. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Champions of Mental Health Event

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 17th I, along with the Minister for Advanced Education and the member from Regina Rosemont, attended the Champions of Mental Health event held by the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan here in Regina.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, Michael Landsberg gave the keynote address. Mr. Landsberg captivated the audience with his testimonial on mental health, which he advocates through his charity Sick Not Weak. Mr. Landsberg made a couple of stops here in

Saskatchewan before the event in Regina, visiting both Fond-du-Lac and The Battlefords to speak about mental illness and his own personal struggles with depression.

Mr. Speaker, Michael's profession revolves around communication, whether it's on his show *Off The Record*, or over TSN [The Sports Network] radio. He now advocates that through communication we can end the stigma surrounding mental health. Michael strongly believes that the deeper a person can speak on his or her mental illness, the more a person can bond and realize that they're not alone in their battle.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to commend Executive Director Dr. Jamie Eng, President Bruce McKee of the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan, and all the volunteers who worked so hard to ensure the gala was a successful fundraiser, especially our friend Joan Baylis who is a tireless advocate in the community of Regina for many different causes. I just want to say thank you to all the volunteers who made this a successful evening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Reconciliation Through Treaty Education

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February a memorandum of understanding was signed by the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association on reconciliation through treaty education.

Mr. Speaker, this memorandum will serve as a tool to overcome obstacles that are affected by treaty relations. Treaty awareness and education both serve as vehicles to the elimination of systemic discrimination and will teach students across this province the importance and the spirit of the treaty. Those who signed the memorandum are confident that through education, reconciliation is achievable.

Treaties hold a sacred covenant as well as respect international law, and it is important for our youth to learn the importance of these agreements. Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson said, and I quote, "Through education about the spirit, the intent, and the treaty relationship, reconciliation can one day be achieved. Education will be the vehicle to take us there."

This government stands behind treaty education, as it will benefit all Saskatchewan students. This memorandum complements many of the SSBA's [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] resolutions adopted recently, including the call to all schools and school board offices in Saskatchewan to display the Treaty Symbol. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly looks forward to the positive impact that this memorandum of understanding will bring to the students of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Holocaust Memorial Service

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

this Sunday, along with the Attorney General and the member from Saskatoon Centre, I was humbled to attend the 2018 Holocaust memorial service held at the Congregation Agudas Israel Synagogue in Saskatoon. This sombre occasion marked the annual remembrance of the horrific events of the Holocaust, where millions of innocent Jews and other minority groups were targeted and murdered.

The keynote speaker this year was Robbie Waisman, a Holocaust survivor. Robbie was born in Poland and was the youngest of six children. Only he and his sister Leah survived the war. He worked as a slave labourer in an ammunitions factory in Buchenwald before being liberated. In addition to the memorial service, Robbie was able to address over 200 students at the Holy Family Cathedral in Saskatoon on Thursday and Friday.

Mr. Speaker, despite the assured difficulty of speaking of such tragic experiences, Robbie continues to share his story. His goal, his hope is that sharing his message will inoculate as many people as possible against hatred. The Congregation Agudas Israel Synagogue shares this ideal as well. They have a long history of exceptional Holocaust education and remembrance, assisting in helping over 20,000 students hear first-hand accounts from survivors over the last 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, education and remembrance is the fervent wish of survivors and the clear responsibility of today's educators and leaders. So on behalf of everyone in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Robbie Waisman and Congregation Agudas Israel Synagogue, and all other survivors who educate others through their stories. We will never forget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Response to Fentanyl Crisis

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, on Friday we lost two more Saskatchewan people to fentanyl overdoses, this time in Maidstone. It's not just an urban problem. All over Saskatchewan, people are struggling to access mental health and addiction support and first response support when overdoses happen. I want to acknowledge and commend the Saskatoon Police Service for their quick response and highlight the *Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act* that's been adopted by Saskatoon and Prince Albert for allowing tainted drugs to be handed in without fear of prosecution or repercussion.

This harm-reduction approach to policing is crucial for saving lives and creating safer communities. My question, Mr. Speaker, is how is the Sask Party government proactively addressing the fentanyl and crystal meth crises, recognizing that law enforcement is but one important piece of the puzzle? What harm-reduction measures are being undertaken to get ahead of these crises?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the member opposite would raise this very important issue, most importantly

with some of the incidences — a number of incidences now — that we have had in multiple communities here in the province of Saskatchewan with respect to opioids and fentanyl and some of them being laced, ultimately resulting in the death of a few Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, I would go even further to say that this is not just an urban issue in the province of Saskatchewan, as it is extending into some other communities. But it's also an issue across the nation of Canada, as we have heard other jurisdictions in Canada also are looking at what they can do to address this ever-so-important issue to protect the citizens of our communities and of our province and of our nation, Mr. Speaker.

We have had a number of initiatives over the last while, Mr. Speaker. They include investment in the combined forces special enforcement unit, as well as enhancing the operations of SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods], Mr. Speaker, here in the province of Saskatchewan. We've made naloxone kits available across the province as well, to an increasing degree, Mr. Speaker. But the fact remains that this will not be dealt with just through law enforcement.

The Leader of the Opposition is correct, and we need to continually work . . . And I think I mentioned in one of the very early questions, if not the first question of this session, Mr. Speaker, this may be an opportunity where both sides of the House would be able to do some work together, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, in looking at the root issues of crime and some of the opportunities that we may have.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the commitment from the Premier to work together on this and to address it. We've heard that commitment to face this issue head-on, but the problem does continue to spread. We've seen fentanyl-laced cocaine showing up in communities like Kamsack and Weyburn. And the Sask Party has continued to limit the distribution of naloxone kits to pharmacies alone and has also limited the distribution of the Narcan Nasal Spray to first responders alone.

Narcan, Mr. Speaker, it's an authorized Canadian-made drug that is life saving. It temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, and having it available free of charge from community-based organizations has been a harm-reduction method that's been shown to save lives in other jurisdictions. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the Sask Party government will follow that lead and make Narcan available free of charge to those community-based organizations to ensure ready accessibility of remedies to counteract overdoses.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I think we take that under advisement. And that's a decision, or a conversation that we may be able to have here, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that those Narcan kits and naloxone kits are available to as many as possible here in the province of Saskatchewan. The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] have provided these

kits to their officers here in the province. We have provided an additional \$50,000 in funding, Mr. Speaker, for take-home kits as well so that they've actually now, Mr. Speaker, distributed almost 500 of those kits and trained 1,500 people in the province to recognize when and how to respond to these overdoses, Mr. Speaker.

These are, there has been investment, Mr. Speaker, in making these kits accessible. As we move forward in the weeks and months, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for us to have that discussion on, is there an opportunity for us to provide more accessibility to just those kits in light of recent occurrences here in the province.

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

Support for Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, it's good to hear that there will be consideration of this. Going down that road to having Narcan available province-wide would really help in this moment of crisis, to have first responders well prepared.

On Thursday, Mr. Speaker, the Premier committed to providing an update on the steps the government has taken and will take in carrying out the recommendations, the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These calls to action, Mr. Speaker, represent an important tool for closing the gap in health, economic, and education outcomes between indigenous and non-indigenous people in the province. It's a welcome and important commitment, Mr. Speaker, and not the first time we've heard a commitment to address those issues.

So my question for the Premier, Mr. Speaker, is when, and in what form, can we expect that update? And importantly, will you commit, will the Premier commit to making that update right here in the House, in the people's Assembly, so that attention to closing that all-important gap receives the high-priority attention that it deserves?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, again, a very important issue and a conversation for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm glad it's been raised here today, Mr. Speaker, because last week in this House and in the rotunda I indicated that we've been active on 26 of the 34 recommendations that are of provincial jurisdiction here in the province of Saskatchewan, 26 of 34 of the recommendations with respect to truth and reconciliation here in the province of Saskatchewan.

I was made aware after that point, Mr. Speaker, that we are actively working on an additional six as well on behalf of the people in our great province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's work that is ongoing, Mr. Speaker, and includes efforts such as being the first province in the nation to implement K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] treaty education, Mr. Speaker, in classrooms across the province of Saskatchewan.

So we are active on a number of the recommendations with respect to truth and reconciliation, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to be active on those into the future, Mr. Speaker, and

I was glad to clarify the record here today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Government Response to First Nations and Métis Nation of Saskatchewan

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Sixties Scoop was a very dark chapter in the history of our province. The effects are still causing real hurt in communities across the province, and they come with a tremendous social and financial cost that affects us all. For so many that were taken during the Sixties Scoop, what they need is healing and closure. An important part of that closure is an apology from the government for all the wrongs committed by governments of all stripes.

Last week the government said that they would make an apology soon. Nearly three years ago the Saskatchewan Party said it was coming soon. So what does "soon" mean this time, Mr. Speaker? Does it mean three more years?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And the answer is no; it shouldn't be three more years, Mr. Speaker. We're going to work very quickly with respect to reaching out again to First Nations leaders, as I said, the leaders of the Métis Nations in the province, as well as reaching out to Sixties Scoop survivors, Mr. Speaker.

And we'll be looking to make that apology in the next number of weeks, possibly a few months. But, Mr. Speaker, this will not be extended into the format of years, Mr. Speaker, into the time frame of years. We're going to be moving very quickly to shape that apology and make it as soon as we are able to on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, everyone understands that this apology needs to happen, along with the consultations of indigenous leadership. No one is questioning that, Mr. Speaker. But using that as an excuse to refuse to move forward is unacceptable. An effective apology takes sincerity. It takes a genuine willingness to engage. Mr. Speaker, recognition of these acts of cultural assimilation and genocide are necessary for reconciliation.

So in addition to scheduling the apology, will the government help us designate a day of memorial for residential schools and Sixties Scoop survivors to recognize the genocide of indigenous people that occurred to reflect upon these historical wrongs and show a real commitment through reconciliation? Will they do that, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations; First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, we certainly understand the very respectful and meaningful tone that we must take when we move forward with our Sixties Scoop apology. And as we've talked about before, we need to have engagement with

our First Nations and Métis communities, and I believe it's fully up to them as to what part of our discussion we need to have to move this forward. So we're looking for all input from our First Nations and Métis partners as to what we need to have in our Sixties Scoop apology and to move this forward as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Management of Provincial Economy

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, while the Sask Party's been busy mishandling all these important issues, they've also been mismanaging Saskatchewan's economy. Now not all reports agree on everything, but in its updated economic forecast, TD [Toronto Dominion] Bank predicts that Saskatchewan will have the worst economic growth outside of the Maritimes in 2018.

Now the Conference Board of Canada disagrees slightly, predicting that Saskatchewan will have the worst growth out of all the provinces in 2018. Other provinces are investing in people and communities, and they're growing. But the Sask Party is cutting and privatizing, and we are falling behind. When will the Sask Party face the music and recognize that their heartless cuts and unfair tax hikes are hurting and not helping our economic recovery?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Here are the facts. RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] projects Saskatchewan will lead the country in economic growth in 2018 with a forecasted 2.9 per cent growth in GDP [gross domestic product].

Here's some more facts, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has the third-lowest unemployment rate in the entire country right now. We have created over 60,000 jobs over the course of the last decade, Mr. Speaker — the second-best rate of job creation in the entirety of the country. And I will put that record up against their record any day of the week, because their record, Mr. Speaker, was the exact opposite of that. In their last 10 years in government, what was their job creation record, Mr. Speaker? The worst in Canada.

The Speaker: — Opposition Whip.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, one cherry-picked report doesn't change the fact: from unemployment to new housing starts, from agriculture to business and restaurants and hotels, Saskatchewan is falling behind. That's not a debate point, Mr. Speaker. It's a fact. But the Sask Party are too busy defending their own mismanagement to notice.

Tens of millions have been wasted on the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] alone. Millions wasted on lawsuits. Millions wasted on the growing debt. Millions wasted and handed to Sask Party supporters. So much public money wasted, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Minister of Trade Development briefly told us what he thinks about the GTH, the Deputy Premier committed to a

public inquiry, and the Premier obviously acknowledges the size of the problems at the GTH because he asked the Attorney General to be in charge of it. So for how much longer are they going to keep defending their GTH scandal and the tens of millions of dollars they wasted on it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well we finally get some economic commentary from the NDP [New Democratic Party] and they refer to the Royal Bank of Canada as having cherry-picked numbers, Mr. Speaker. I would venture to suggest that they would disagree with that opinion, Mr. Speaker.

What we're seeing developing is a very, very clear choice, Mr. Speaker, between the opposition and this government opposite. We see on this side common sense ideas, Mr. Speaker. On that side what we're seeing, unrealistic and massive, massive spending plans, \$2.5 billion.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are standing up to Justin Trudeau. We are defending the economic interests of this province and we are opposing a tax being imposed on Saskatchewan by the Liberal government. What are we seeing on that side, Mr. Speaker? The white flag. The Leader of the Opposition advocating that we do what Trudeau wants, that we impose a carbon tax on our people. Mr. Speaker, we are not going to surrender to Justin Trudeau like that member would want us to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, all huffing and puffing aside, what that minister is failing to do is to acknowledge that they are relying on one report from the RBC. But both the TD Bank and the Conference Board paint a much different picture. So if he wants to talk about cherry picking, that's the cherry picking that he should be talking about.

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister face the facts, deal with the facts, and report the facts to the public?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well I am very happy to stand up in this House every day of the week and defend this government's record on the economy, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2007, capital investment in this province has increased by 70 per cent. The population of this province has grown, Mr. Speaker, by over 160,000, a rate of growth that we have not seen in Saskatchewan since the 1930s.

We also know what their record is, and the problem for them is the people of this province also remember what their record is — the worst job creation record in Canada, people fleeing in droves, our young people having to leave this province to find opportunity.

Things have changed, Mr. Speaker. A government on this side that puts a priority on ensuring economic growth, the third

lowest unemployment rate in Canada, the second best rate in the entire country of job creation over the course of the last decade, versus their record of failure.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to convince us that two plus two equals a bushel of potatoes. The people of Saskatchewan are not buying it. Mr. Speaker, they can't simply wish away their own bad management, and they can't simply wish away workers' rights either. Their attempt to cut 3.5 per cent from workers across the province has been an abject failure, Mr. Speaker. And now the Premier says that he wants to cut 5 per cent more.

Support workers in our kids' classrooms have pushed back against these cuts and have earned a modest increase. Meanwhile, for the first time in Saskatchewan's history, teachers are heading to arbitration and we won't have an answer to that contract until the next school year.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education admit that their tax and cuts are hurting our kids' classrooms, and will he commit today to showing a little more respect to the people who work in our kids' classrooms every day?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated its commitment to public education, Mr. Speaker . . . I lost my train of concentration.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, just a month ago, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — I have no idea. Okay, what do we do? We wait it out? Can we recess? Can we recess? We'll recess while we check out the buzzer.

All right. Okay, I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Let's see if I can regain my thought, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a month ago I was proud to stand in the rotunda of this building, Mr. Speaker, when our Premier stood up and announced seven and a half million dollars in in-year funding for public education, Mr. Speaker. That annualizes to \$30 million, Mr. Speaker. That demonstrates, that shows this government's commitment to ensuring that we increase resources to the classroom, Mr. Speaker.

That's on top, Mr. Speaker, of the significant commitments that this government has made over the last number of years when it comes to infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. So this government is committed to continuing to support children in our classroom, Mr. Speaker. We understand how important ensuring that education is for our children, Mr. Speaker. You can continue to expect, Mr. Speaker, that this government will support children in our classrooms, and continue to support with the proper amount of funding.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Public Service, Crown Corporations, and Government-Owned Buildings

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, I've heard a lot of talk about pants being on fire over the years, but that's the first time I've ever seen that government set off the fire alarm.

You know, certainly when it comes to the record, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that added three new MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] positions. They've got at least a couple more by-elections coming up at about \$400,000 a pop, but they aren't looking themselves in the mirror, Mr. Speaker.

Instead they're going after some of the hardest working and lowest paid people in the entire public service. Last year it was the people who clean the offices in this, the people's Legislative Building. Now they're targeting the people who work in the cafeteria. How on earth can the Minister of Central Services justify helping themselves while attacking these hard-working men and women?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can rest assured that this government is concerned about each and every taxpayer dollar, Mr. Speaker. The Dome cafeteria was the last government-run cafeteria. In 2016 it lost \$33,000. In 2017 it lost \$39,000. What we're doing is going out to the private sector for proposals to see how we can operate this in a more efficient fashion, and one that is more cognizant of taxpayers' dollars. Now we know members opposite aren't too worried about taxpayers' dollars. The Leader of the Opposition has already spent \$2.5 billion of taxpayers' money, even before he takes over.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the problem is we didn't hear a darn thing about that from this government in the last election. They did say though that they would protect our Crowns, but then of course they put everything from SaskTel to government buildings on the chopping block. And last week at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, the Minister of Central Services said, and I quote, "There are 660 government buildings across Saskatchewan. That's something I became aware of when I became minister. I think that's too many."

Mr. Speaker, it begs a couple of questions. If 660 is too many, then what's the right number? And, Mr. Speaker, the second question is this: if they succeed in selling them off, if the garage sale goes through, will they then make a guarantee that they won't be renting them back, having sold them off?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. Each year this government meets with groups like SARM, like SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], like the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, and they challenge us to make sure that the government footprint is as small as possible

so we can concentrate on our priorities like health care and education and social services, Mr. Speaker.

Each and every day, again we're concerned about each and every taxpayer's dollar. Mr. Speaker, we're not ideologically driven when it comes to this. If a government building can be better operated by another level of government or the private sector, so be it.

Mr. Speaker, we can just turn to the forestry centre. You know, that was a building that had a lot of controversy when it was first established. Now it's being operated by the University of Saskatchewan, much to the delight of the city of Prince Albert and area. I think all members on this side of the House and the member opposite would agree that that's the best use for that facility.

If there are other examples like that in Melville or other places, we're asking the people who were elected in other capacities to let this government know. And again we will be responsible for each and every taxpayer dollar.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, how many government buildings are they looking to sell off? What's the right number?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, what we are committed to do is to look at each and every one of those buildings and to assure that they are operating in the proper fashion and that they are in their highest and best use.

But, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite again are being hypocritical. I know that it happens quite often in question period. But again, when they were in government . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And one of the former ministers there is letting us know his opinion. They sold off the Echo Valley Conference Centre in 2004. They sold off the Diocese of Qu'Appelle site in Regina in 2003, and they sold off the Souris Valley Regional Care Centre in 2003. Again, Mr. Speaker, I know they're a different group, they say, over there. This is a group that now is spending \$2.5 billion of taxpayers' money in the hope of them getting elected. Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House will make sure that that never happens.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, a lot of volume but not a lot of answers. So I'll try it again, Mr. Speaker. He said that 660 buildings is too many, you know, and I'd be interested in knowing how he arrived at that being too many. But I guess the question we're looking for the answer to is, how many is the right number? Is he looking to sell off two-thirds? Is he looking to sell off all 660? What's the right number?

If he's got an opinion on it being too many, Mr. Speaker, surely he wouldn't be so irresponsible as to come forward and say that, you know, it's just a wide open garage sale, a fire sale where everything must go, Mr. Speaker. Surely he's got a right

number in mind. And what is that number?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much. As I indicated in the previous answer, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about each and every one of those buildings, and we want to make sure that they're used in their highest and best capacity, whether that's by the Government of Saskatchewan or again if we're talking to 2,000 elected leaders of SARM and asking them if they have some ideas. Not all good ideas come from under the dome of this building and from members opposite. We're asking members for their highest and best use. And I've already received an inquiry from Melville, for example, Mr. Speaker.

People want to make sure that each and every taxpayer's dollar goes as far as it can, and that's something that members on this side of the House take very seriously. And we will continue to do it by judiciously looking at every building that this government owns.

The Speaker: — Well that was a very spirited debate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Federal-Provincial Agreement to Support Early Learning and Child Care

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday I had the pleasure of announcing a three-year bilateral agreement with the federal government to deepen our commitment to early learning and child care in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this agreement allocates \$41 million of new dollars over three years toward expanding access to child care in this province.

I was pleased to be joined in this announcement by the Hon. Ralph Goodale, attending on behalf of the Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. And I was extremely grateful for the federal co-operation to make this agreement. It will have a tremendous positive impact on our children, Mr. Speaker. I was also pleased to make the announcement at the Seven Stones Child Care Centre, a facility built by our government, located right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a moment to recognize and thank early childhood educators and care providers for the important contributions they make to children, Saskatchewan's children and families, across this province. In Saskatchewan with our growing economy, we have an ever-increasing demand for early learning and child care as more parents want to enter the workforce or pursue post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the value of early learning and care opportunities for our youngest citizens in supporting positive social and emotional development, early literacy, and school achievement. That's why this learning and child care is a

priority for our government. In just the first year of our government, Mr. Speaker, we added 500 licensed child care spaces. Since then we have increased funding to child care spaces by \$13 million. We've expanded the number of licensed child care spaces by almost 6,000 and we have over doubled the number of early years pre-K program spaces.

Using this funding we will be able to continue to meet the priorities identified in Saskatchewan's first ever early years plan by introducing 2,515 new licensed child care spaces. With these new spaces, we will have an increased number of licensed child care spaces by approximately 75 per cent since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out a few other notable features of this agreement. This agreement includes 1,500 spaces targeted to group and family care facilities. We value our minority language groups, and as such, there are 65 spaces specifically allocated to francophone communities.

We have also allocated funding for pilot programs designed to provide early year opportunities for children 3 to 4 who require intensive supports. This includes partnering with school divisions to deliver these pilots. Finally, we will be improving the quality of our early learning and child care sector by investing in educator training, operational supports, licence improvements, programming grants, and literacy supports.

Mr. Speaker, communities across Saskatchewan are in need of licensed child care. Over the next few months, many communities in Saskatchewan will be also allocated new spaces. It's our goal to have all the new spaces opened as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this is very good news for Saskatchewan children and families. Our children represent our future, and every dollar we invest in our children now will pay dividends decades into the future through healthier, happier adults. I want to thank the federal government for partnering with our government to deliver much needed supports to our province's families. We are grateful for this investment in our future.

These new child care spaces represent just how great our government's commitment to Saskatchewan children is. We will continue to prioritize our children's future by taking care of them now, and we are keeping Saskatchewan strong by years to come by doing so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond and thank you to the minister for that important announcement. I did regard the news release this weekend and some of the coverage with regard to the allocation of these federal funds, with much interest, and I know that this is an area that we do need. I share that with the minister. This is an area in this province that desperately needs investment. And I note that this \$41 million over the next three years represents about three times the increase that we've seen over the last number of years, and that need has only continued to grow in this province, Mr. Speaker.

From the Saskatchewan early years plan, we know that every dollar that we invest in this area in early learning, quality early

learning and child care, we return between 4 and \$9 back in revenue. So not only is this important for families to meet the needs that they are experiencing today with regard to availability of child care spaces and quality early years education, it also is an important economic investment in this province. And I think it's important that we view child care and early learning not simply as an expense, but as an investment in these children and an investment in the future of this province.

I do look forward to perhaps some more details, Mr. Speaker, with regard to this funding from the federal government, this \$41 million. And some of the areas that we continue to have questions about I would just, I think, be remiss not to bring up here.

Just with regard to retention, I know that the minister noted the degree to which those who work in early childhood centres and in early childhood programs how much they're valued but, Mr. Speaker, we hear consistently about the need to address rates of compensation and to address the turnover within those systems. And so hopefully, that's something with this money that will free up other money to look at that, Mr. Speaker.

But again, I will have more questions later when we move into committee perhaps, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to join with the minister in welcoming these federal dollars, this \$41 million in this investment in the very important area of early child care and early learning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee.

Standing Committee on House Services

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that the committee has considered standing committee memberships and to present its ninth report. I move:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Chair of House Services Committee:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 121 — *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*. This bill will implement a provincial regulatory scheme for legalized cannabis in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, federal Bill C-45 is expected to come into force in the summer of 2018. Once in force, that bill will implement a federal framework to provide restricted access to legalized cannabis in Canada. In response to the federal government's decision to legalize cannabis, it is necessary for the province to pass cannabis legislation to regulate those matters that fall under provincial jurisdiction or are otherwise not addressed within the federal scheme.

Mr. Speaker, a primary focus of the proposed provincial legislation is to ensure the health and safety of citizens. In particular, protecting minors from the harmful effects of cannabis is an important goal for government. Under the federal legislation, the minimum age for the consumption and possession of cannabis is 18. Further, the federal legislation allows minors under the age of 18 to possess up to five grams of cannabis with no consequences. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has made it clear that provinces may adopt a higher minimum age of consumption and possession for minors. Additionally the federal government has encouraged provinces to adopt provincial laws to address minors who possess less than five grams of cannabis.

The proposed legislation will prohibit the possession, consumption, or distribution of cannabis by minors under the age of 19. This is in line with the province's legal age for consumption of alcohol. It also aligns with the minimum age chosen by many other provinces and territories. This Act will also allow police to issue tickets to minors who are found in possession of cannabis, and to seize that cannabis.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation contains further rules respecting the sale and possession and consumption of cannabis by adults. The Act will prohibit the consumption of cannabis by adults in public places or in vehicles. Individuals that wish to consume cannabis will be required to do so in a private location such as their home or cottage. The legal possession and distribution limits set by this legislation will mirror the limits set within the federal Act. In particular adults will be allowed to possess up to 30 grams of dried cannabis in public and grow up to four plants within their private households.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will also allow for the establishment and regulation of a private system for the retail sale, distribution, and wholesaling of cannabis in the province. This system will be administered and regulated by the provincial cannabis authority, which is expected to be designated as the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. Cannabis permittees will be required to comply with all the rules, terms, and conditions that are established by this Act, the regulations, and SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming

Authority]. This approach will ensure that the sale and distribution of cannabis is conducted in a safe and reliable manner while providing new economic opportunities for Saskatchewan businesses.

Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes that certain municipalities and First Nations do not want retail cannabis stores operating within their community. As a result under this legislation, retail permits will not be issued in communities that choose to prohibit retail cannabis stores.

Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to ensuring the health and safety of the people of Saskatchewan. The legalization of cannabis is a complex topic, and there is no doubt that our regulatory system will develop and evolve over time as we gain experience in this area. However, I am confident that the proposed legislation will implement a safe and effective regulatory system for the sale, possession, and consumption of legal cannabis in this province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 121, *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased on behalf of the opposition caucus to rise in my place today to again offer our perspective on the bills as they're being introduced by the current government.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 121, *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*, Mr. Speaker, talks about the legalization of cannabis throughout the country as the federal government has certainly made the commitment a couple of years ago to deal with the whole notion around cannabis in general.

This bill creates a regulatory framework for legalized cannabis and, as indicated by the minister, there are key elements in the framework which talks about consuming cannabis in public places being prohibited. Possession of more than 30 grams and more than four plants is prohibited. People under 19 years of age are prohibited from possessing or consuming cannabis, and it's punishable by a fine up to \$2,000. Possession of cannabis in a vehicle is prohibited except when transporting it from the place it was obtained to the place it will be consumed. And finally, Mr. Speaker, rules for retail stores selling cannabis are also established in this bill.

[14:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we've indicated from time to time again, it's on numerous . . . and pretty par for the course when it comes to the Saskatchewan Party is they're always late for preparing for something that they know is coming down as law. And there's no question that this was a promise made by the federal Liberal government when they were elected in 2015.

And this is no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that the cannabis bill is coming forward. And it's just over the last several weeks that the Saskatchewan Party government has come forward

responding to the efforts by the federal government to make this . . . or the plans by the federal government to make cannabis legal throughout the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that we want to certainly support in the bill itself, as an opposition party. First of all, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats support the minimum age of 19 and the prohibition on consumption in public places. We think that's obviously that first step to make sure that we protect the younger children, those that aren't able to make some significant critical decisions in their young lives. And I think it's important that we do all we can to protect children and youth and families from the effects of drug use throughout the province. There's no question that we, as an elected individual, that we often see the ravages of illicit drug use in not only our cities and our country but certainly in our northern communities as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that when it comes to the whole notion of cannabis and the legalization of cannabis by the federal government, there's got to be some key components when we talk about discussion and how we move this agenda forward. There's no question from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, that some of the quick values that people see as a result of this federal law, Mr. Speaker . . . As much as we don't want to recognize that illicit drug use is very difficult on families, we want to point out that sometimes when we look at the actual law being proposed by the federal government, that when you overcriminalize the use of cannabis, it certainly ties up a lot of the court processes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that if we're to spend much more of our time in the court system dealing with the harder drugs that are out there in our cities and in our country and in our northern communities — the harder drugs like crystal meth, Mr. Speaker, and fentanyl, and of course cocaine, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker — if we overcriminalize cannabis, it'll really tie up the courts, and perhaps the better, smarter use of the court system would deal with the harder drugs that are certainly out there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other point that we wanted to talk about is certainly the notion around engaging the industry for the responsible administration of this federal law. I know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, that there has been a call for solid discussions around this matter. Both the Saskatchewan Party government and the opposition have been subjected to numerous presentations by people involved with the retail sector or certainly the dispensary services, Mr. Speaker. So there's no question that one of the issues that the craft dispensaries are indicating to the government is that there ought to be a grandfathering clause for those who have entered this particular industry knowing full well that the federal government was going to legalize cannabis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the current industry players have done is they've approached not only the opposition, but they've also approached the Saskatchewan Party government. We know that there was written documentation sent to both the Minister of Justice and also to the Minister for SLGA. I understand that the Minister of SLGA received a letter, responded to that letter, and did not agree to have any meeting with some of the current industry players, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, at the very

least, the Minister from SLGA responded to the letter sent to him by one particular industry representative, and the Minister of Justice did not, did not respond to the letter, did not respond to a call for having discussions.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's exactly what some of the industry players are indicating to us as legislators, is that we have to make sure we have that robust discussion on how we make sure that the intent behind cannabis and to make sure it's legalized, is that to ensure it doesn't . . . It follows through with what its intent is, as discussed in the federal bill, to ensure the safety of our children, to make sure it's responsibly used and that there are ways and means and measures in which we could certainly monitor those that may be having too much cannabis, and of course, driving on our streets and being a threat to us all. So there's no questions, Mr. Speaker, we have to take a lot of time to discuss this bill.

There's a lot of issues that I want to touch on as it comes to the harder drugs. I want to focus on the matter that I spoke about earlier, in a sense that it is a bit rich coming from the Government of Saskatchewan that are not engaging industry to the extent that they should, Mr. Speaker, on this original bill or this original matter around cannabis.

And as we've said before, we agree with the two perspectives of being 18 years of age and prohibiting those that want to use cannabis in public places. We support those particular points of the bill, Mr. Speaker. But here's where we don't agree with the current government as we move forward. Some people see the value, some people see the value of not over-criminalizing cannabis as it does tie up the court system. And others see the value that, as you reduce the court system challenges and pressures on dealing with cannabis, it allows the justice system to free up valuable court time to deal with the harder drugs that are out there challenging our families and our youth and even our children, Mr. Speaker.

And this is why I want to go back to my point earlier: it is a bit rich for the government to tout the cannabis bill as being something that the federal government's imposing upon them. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, they're not sending, they're not providing one bit of help to many of these communities that are struggling with the major addictions of the more potent drugs that are out there.

We see this on a continual basis, Mr. Speaker, whether it's mental health therapy or whether it's just health help in general, Mr. Speaker, whether it's counselling services that are required. Many communities, not only throughout Saskatchewan but even the northern part of the province, are crying for more and more services to help reclaim families and young people and even children, as I mentioned, that are getting caught up in the drug trade, Mr. Speaker, and the effects are being felt by many of our northern communities. We need to have services to fight for the people to come off these drugs and to reclaim them because many times, Mr. Speaker, as we deal with the drug issue throughout the province . . .

Most people know me as being a very, very anti-drug advocate, and I think one of the things that's really important is that as we pursue the notion around dealing with harder drugs, Mr. Speaker, we have to have two principles in mind. Number one

is to recognize and understand the ravages of illicit drug use in all of our families. And many families are being impacted, Mr. Speaker. And the second thing is to not be judgmental, to not judge those that are getting caught up in this particular activity because, Mr. Speaker, many of them are highly valuable people in our province and in our communities, in our groups, in our organizations, in our families.

So it's important to note that there are many valuable people that just get caught up in this particular activity and that they do need help and they do need understanding in getting themselves off this addiction because, Mr. Speaker, they are very, very valuable Saskatchewan people that we need to make sure that we give them the opportunity to seek that help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in many of our northern communities . . . And this is why I get a bit angry with the Saskatchewan Party government when they turn around and talk about cannabis and what the federal government is trying to do to our young people, Mr. Speaker. They've used that argument before. But, Mr. Speaker, the fact is there's harder drugs in our community, harder than ever; whether it's crystal meth or whether it's cocaine that's laced with fentanyl, Mr. Speaker, or whether it's heroin. And what we see is that the current government is not doing anything to help some of these communities combat these harder drugs coming into our schools, coming into our playgrounds, coming into our homes, Mr. Speaker.

We need more action from this government to make sure that there are services available, counselling services to reclaim these people. And there's nothing coming from this current government, Mr. Speaker, to combat those harder drug challenges that many communities and many families face throughout Saskatchewan.

So I'm going to watch with very close interest, Mr. Speaker, how this government deals with this particular bill. Are they going to run back to their argument that oh, all drugs are evil, and that's the problem, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely all illicit drugs are bad for the community. Nobody's arguing that, Mr. Speaker. But the corresponding argument I would have for them is, what are they doing to reclaim the people that are being impacted by illicit drug use? Are they providing counselling services?

And I look at some of my own communities in my constituency, Mr. Speaker — no services whatsoever to help reclaim these families, Mr. Speaker. And the system that is pushing many of these young people towards illicit drug use, Mr. Speaker, there's no intervention to help. The schools are all alone in trying to stem many of the families being impacted by the harder drugs, as I talked about earlier. And, Mr. Speaker, there is no help for them. Grandparents that are raising young people that are struggling with these addictions, there's no help for them as well, Mr. Speaker.

And as many of the communities begin to struggle with more and more people getting caught up in the illicit drug use, Mr. Speaker, there's less and less help from the Government of Saskatchewan. And I say to them, that's a crying shame because these are Saskatchewan people who are highly valuable, and we should do everything we can to help them recover from this tremendous strain that they're under, and this

terrible and heavy addiction that they have. There's nothing there to help these families out of that predicament, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why today, from our perspective, as the federal government legalizes cannabis, we're not advocating for the use of drugs. That's not what this is about, Mr. Speaker. We're saying that if you overcriminalize cannabis, you're tying up the court system. We must educate, and we must help the people recover. So as we shift gears to the harder drugs and saying, okay, if we don't overcriminalize cannabis, are we freeing up resources? Are we freeing up valuable resources to combat the heavier and harder drugs that are ravaging our communities? Well, Mr. Speaker, that's an answer that the Saskatchewan Party government cannot answer today.

And this is the important point that many people in industry are also asking. What are we doing as a society to help those that want to combat the harder drugs out there that are ravaging our communities? Many of the people that we speak to in industry itself talk about those compelling challenges that many families and many communities face across our province. So I think it's really, really important, Mr. Speaker, that we have this discussion.

Now I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, as you look at some of the efforts of some of the communities in my region — and one of the communities I'm very proud of is the community of Beauval — they have, at many occasions, tried their very best to try and help stem some of the challenges around drug use and the effects it has in our communities. And, Mr. Speaker, Beauval's been working very closely with a number of organizations. There's two particular organizations that have an effort to try and provide services to families being caught up in the harder drugs — such as I mentioned, cocaine and crack, and of course things like fentanyl and heroin and so on and so forth.

These drugs are coming north. They have been in the North for a long time, and people across the North have been calling for services to reclaim these lives. We think, Mr. Speaker, that is a very, very sound proposal that's being asked for by the people of some of the northern communities.

Governments, you need to help people recover from these addictions. And right now you have no help whatsoever offered in these communities. So don't stand up and start talking about the drug issues in our communities without putting money where your mouth is because, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, many families, many youth, many people are deserving of help and we need to provide them with as much service as we possibly can to get them away from this addiction. That is something that is absolutely paramount to some of the thinking that we have as the New Democratic Party when it comes to the whole notion around this particular bill because this bill elicits that larger discussion around the harder drugs. There's no question about that in my mind, Mr. Speaker.

And going back to the community of Beauval, I'm not sure of one of the groups that have been organized by the mayor himself, but there's another organization called Greenleaf, Mr. Speaker. They're looking at ways in which they could recover, help families recover, because this is a critical missing piece. And I often tell people in my communities a couple of things. I

say to them, you know, it's important to note that as you look around some of the communities — not just in the North, it's every community in the province — we have a problem with illicit drugs affecting many of our families. We cannot deny that it's a part of our lives.

[14:45]

So what do we do? What do we do? And what I point out to people in my constituency is that as you look around these northern communities, what programs are there to help the people that get caught up in these addictions? What facility is there to help them recover? What effort is there on behalf of the government to help these communities reclaim these young people or some adults or some children being caught up in this particular trade? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. Nothing is being done to counter the effects and certainly the introduction of some of these harder drugs in these northern communities. And that is a crying shame, Mr. Speaker, because these are Saskatchewan people deserving of help.

If they come forward asking for help, Mr. Speaker, they should have services available. They should have counsellors available. They should have facilities that they can go to, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you thousands of examples of people that have talked to me over the years as the MLA on how they need help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know in northern Saskatchewan a lot of grandparents raise their grandkids. They help their own children raise the younger ones. And I can tell you many grandparents struggle with the teenagers as they get older, that they get introduced to some of these drugs. And many of them cry, many of them cry, saying that we're finding it so difficult to deal with our grandson or granddaughter when it comes to illegal drug use, and there doesn't seem to be any help out there, no help whatsoever.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why we pay very close attention to this bill. We want to see if this government stops playing politics with this bill and starts providing promise with this bill, by promising to put healing centres in northern Saskatchewan, where people could finally go instead of having to relocate from their northern communities, either to a centre in the South, and in many cases to the jails in the South. Mr. Speaker, perhaps there's an opportunity, and perhaps there's hope for recovery, if we had these healing centres and recovery centres right in our community.

And that's why I commend the community of Beauval so much. I think they've figured this out, that it's something that's really, really important. I also commend the schools that are doing all they can to educate the young children that they have in their care, and the youth they have in their care, about the dangers of drug use. I also commend and recognize the role models out there, Mr. Speaker, role models that go out there and advocate for a drug-free life, and something that we should always do, Mr. Speaker.

I commend those that organize walks — you know, walks throughout the community, healing walks that tell people that there is a better way, that we needn't all reach out to drugs. I commend those that provide hope to those that are struggling with drug addictions, especially the hard addictions that I spoke

about earlier, Mr. Speaker.

So this bill, this bill that's being forwarded by the government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it is irresponsible of them to not engage industry, the current industry, and having robust discussions, and having really good discussions around what their role would be, Mr. Speaker. It is not as if some of the current players did not reach out by way of telephone calls, by way of letters, asking for meetings, asking to be engaged, only to be met with no response or the answer from the current minister of SLGA: thanks for your concern, but we're not going to meet with you. Mr. Speaker, that is not the approach that the government should be taking as it deals with current people that are involved with the dispensaries throughout the communities.

I think that there should be . . . Those discussions should happen and, Mr. Speaker, the discussions should happen in a very formal, professional, and intelligent way. If that's not being provided by the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker — which I doubt will happen because we've seen them time and time again go back to their old, tired politics as opposed to having good, solid discussions, Mr. Speaker — I fear that the next action of some of these current players will be through the court system, Mr. Speaker. And that defeats the whole process that we spoke about earlier as we deal with the legalization of cannabis.

So, Mr. Speaker, our caucus has a lot of discussion around this particular bill. I know many more of my learned colleagues, those that are engaged with industry itself, Mr. Speaker, and are aware of the legal framework of how this could be implemented properly, Mr. Speaker, of how we could use this as an opportunity if there is a generation of funds for government, that it would be used to provide services to combat the harder drugs that are threatening our families and our communities and our way of life.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have more on this particular bill, as I've indicated, and I'll look forward to some of the comments of my colleagues as they have put a lot of thought into this particular bill. So on that note I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 121, the cannabis control Act.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 121, *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Bill No. 122 — *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2018/Loi de 2018 corrélative de la loi intitulée The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I will now rise to move second reading of *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2018*. This bill will make consequential amendments to bilingual legislation that are necessary to implement the cannabis control Act. Mr. Speaker, I previously noted that the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming

Authority is expected to be designated as the provincial cannabis authority. The proposed amendments in this bill will update SLGA's current legislation to clarify that SLGA is responsible for the regulation and control of any other matters that may be assigned to it. This will ensure that SLGA has authority to carry out its assigned duties and powers as the cannabis authority.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, this bill contains a small number of amendments to other pieces of bilingual legislation. These amendments are housekeeping in nature and will not have a substantive impact on the operation of those Acts.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Cannabis Control (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2018*.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading on cannabis control Act No. 122. Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, as I've indicated, I want to continue on with our discussion around this particular bill. There's no question that the consequential amendment Acts as being proposed by the current government as it relates to the cannabis legalization process, Mr. Speaker, is going to elicit a lot of discussion across the province of Saskatchewan.

Now as I indicated to the bill previously, which really talked about how they wish to implement this cannabis federal law that's coming forward, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the people of Saskatchewan of this: that as the Saskatchewan Party sit on their holier-than-thou attitude as it comes to drug use, Mr. Speaker, you ask them the questions, what are you doing as a party to combat drug use within our communities? What resources are you affording, Mr. Speaker, the question I have, what resources are you affording to reclaim the families, the youth, the children that are being impacted by the illicit drug use?

Do not let the cannabis legislation as being proposed by the federal government cloud your view of what the Saskatchewan Party is not doing. This is the point that I raise on a continual basis, Mr. Speaker, and this is exactly how I see, from my perspective, of how the conservatives work across the country of Canada. They are very, very good at pointing out the other party's faults and weaknesses, Mr. Speaker, but they never take a look at themselves. And this is a good example of what I would implore the people of Saskatchewan to do, is look at what the Saskatchewan Party is not doing, Mr. Speaker.

As I travel throughout the North, there is no services whatsoever to help the families struggling with the harder drugs, as I made reference to. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if there'd been efforts designed within this bill, had there been provisions identified within this bill that talked about what people in northern Saskatchewan and throughout the whole province would ask, where are the supports to reclaim the families being impacted by illicit drug use? Where are the mental health therapists that would be there to help some of these families and young people struggling through these addictions?

And it's not just young people, Mr. Speaker. There are many adults that are impacted as well. Where are the community initiatives that would be so essential to making sure that education and preventing young people from getting caught up in the harder drugs, where is that in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker?

I want to talk about what's missing in these bills, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to what the Saskatchewan Party wanted to do, is simply turn around and not do anything and hope nobody notices, Mr. Speaker. Well the people of Saskatchewan are noticing, Mr. Speaker. I've had privy to many, many discussions, many, many discussions of older people that are just really having a difficult time, struggling with this introduction of harder drugs in some of our small northern communities, Mr. Speaker.

There are tons of people that are crying out for help. There are people out there that need help, Mr. Speaker. There are people out there that need intervention. There are people out there that need to talk to a counsellor, that need to talk to someone, that want to get off these addictions, Mr. Speaker, because it is not them. It is not them, Mr. Speaker. They want to go back to who they were. And in many times, Mr. Speaker, I see these people impacted by this as being very loving, caring, community-minded individuals. And once they get caught up in these addictions, Mr. Speaker, they become changed people, and the whole community changes for the worse.

And I want to know what the Saskatchewan Party government is doing to combat that. I want to know exactly what measures that they have in place to make sure that they provide leaders, leadership, that they provide that lead for the people of Saskatchewan to be proud to say we're dealing with this issue in our own Saskatchewan way, Mr. Speaker. And I see none of that. I see none of that in any way, shape, or form.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the people of Saskatchewan that a lot of the crime throughout our communities and throughout our province is directly linked to the addiction cycle, particularly on some of the harder drugs. And I think people are trying to figure out how we grapple with that. And I would say to the people out there that are having these addiction challenges, that are sitting at home and maybe thinking of that, don't give up hope. Don't give up hope. You are a valuable person that can make much contribution to not only yourself but to your family, to your people, and to your community. Reach out if you have to, and yes, it will be a struggle to go through some of the challenges that you have.

And I don't say it from experience, Mr. Speaker. I've seen many valuable people get caught up using crystal meth or using cocaine, Mr. Speaker, and it really has a negative effect. I want to be very, very clear, and I've said it many times in this Assembly. I don't ever want to appear to be a hypocrite. So yes, from time to time I do have my beer. And, Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy having a drink from time to time. But it's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that I don't need it and it doesn't interfere with my work, I think. But I'm not going to be, I'm not going to be judgmental on others that do. I just want to be very perfectly clear that I'm not, I'm not . . . I don't want to take the approach that I don't partake in having a drink every now and then. But, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important is to recognize that

there are people out there struggling with some of the addictions I made earlier.

So I'm going to say this very loud and clear. As a result of this bill, if the Saskatchewan Party wanted to provide leadership instead of just simply pointing at other parties doing the wrong thing, then part of that leadership, as we would indicate from this side of the Assembly, is that you provide services to reclaim as many families as you possibly can, to get them away from these addictions and go back to what they were before — happy, productive people that can make a significant difference to their family and their communities. You've got to have that.

And it was with a great amount of interest that I listened to President Obama when he spoke about, what he referred to as . . . The former President George Bush talked about the war on drugs. He spoke about the war on drugs, Mr. Speaker. President Obama got up one day and said we also have to have a war on reclaiming families addicted to drugs by giving them the myriad of services that they require. And I think that was a very solid argument that the former President Obama indicated, that we have to have a war on recovery of the people affected by these addictions. And this is exactly my point.

As we look at the cannabis legalization process, Mr. Speaker, the question I would ask is, if you're getting money from the sale of cannabis and if you're deriving revenues either through taxation or whatever means, Mr. Speaker, then we would tell the Saskatchewan Party government that you've got to have the corresponding services at the community level and begin the process of rebuilding families, rebuilding our young people and those that become addicted to the heavier drugs.

[15:00]

Because, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing that many of those people are highly valuable people and they just made some wrong choices at the wrong time. And everybody is allowed to make a mistake, Mr. Speaker. Lord knows, I've made many of them. But everybody's allowed to make mistakes, and we all do our very best to help them recover.

So I think it's really important that we speak about that. And once again I would tell this to the North, the people that I represent, the constituency I come from, is don't lose hope. Don't lose hope. Fight every inch of the way. Because while we're talking about legalization of cannabis, Mr. Speaker, we cannot forget the danger and threat the harder drugs have on our many children and families that we have in our lives. We have to do all that we can to protect them from these challenges.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can say too as well that during my travels, there are many families out there that are wonderful. I see a lot of families that are engaging their kids. They're talking to the teenagers within their home and they're warning them of the dangers. So there are many very, very strong families in my constituency that really work hard to keep their families drug free. They work hard to show their children compassion and love and, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly a lot of families out there that I want to commend.

So I've pointed out, as I've said time and time again, I have this incredible belief that every single person in this province is of

significant value to us all. They are of significant value to us all. People in our communities . . . And I take that position very clearly in my own community, that every single person can make a significant, positive contribution to our town because they have such abilities. And each of them each have an individual gift or they have a special skill that only they can do best. And this is what I look for in a lot of people, Mr. Speaker.

So once again I would implore the Government of Saskatchewan, as we begin to embark on this journey as it pertains to the legalization of cannabis, is let us not blind ourselves by you simply saying, oh, this federal government's bringing in this legalization of cannabis. Why don't you do something about the harder drug problems we have throughout our province instead of just complaining about what the federal Liberal government's going to do?

I think it's time that they did and, Mr. Speaker, if they don't, I'll go back to my statement again. Once again the right wing governments we have across this country are so eloquent at pointing out the weaknesses of other parties when they need to take a hard look at themselves. And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if they don't rise to the occasion on this challenge today, that once again they've failed miserably the future of our province, of our families, of our youth, and of our children caught up in this incredible challenge of addiction to harder drugs.

Mr. Speaker, something has got to be done. Something has got to be done, Mr. Speaker, and this is the reason why this debate is so important for the people of Saskatchewan, and why today I'm so glad that all my colleagues will be rising in their place to add their points at a later time.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 122, the cannabis control consequential amendments Act, 2018.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn Bill No. 122, the cannabis control consequential amendment Act, 2018. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 74

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 74 — *The Evidence Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative de 2017 sur la preuve*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and enter into the debate for Bill No. 74, *The Evidence Amendment Act*. Mr. Speaker, I know a few of my colleagues have had the opportunity already to speak to this bill.

I don't have a lot to add as critic for this bill. I think more of the discussion around this bill will happen at committee.

Based on my understanding of the bill, Mr. Speaker, it's largely a housekeeping bill with some language and wording changes that essentially modernize *The Evidence Act* and help to create a more easy-to-read piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

One thing the bill does do that I want to flag is it takes some pieces of the legislation and moves them into the regulations. And, Mr. Speaker, it's always, always a concern when you're in opposition when power is moving from legislation to regulations because it . . . Although it can, on one side, allow for changes that need to happen or decisions that need to be made by folks other than these folks around the table to make them a little bit more quickly, it does also prevent the level of oversight that we have when legislation is tabled as bills in the House or when amendments are tabled as bills in the House, Mr. Speaker. So we'll be delving into that a little bit at committee.

I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to ask the Minister of Justice questions around that as well as some other questions with respect to that bill. But as such, I'm going to end my discussion about Bill No. 74 at this time. Like I said, more appropriate to have more of this discussion in committee, so as such I would like to move Bill No. 74, *The Evidence Amendment Act*, to committee.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Douglas Park has moved adjournment to committee. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, second reading. The question before the Assembly is Bill No. 74 be moved to committee.

Okay. The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 74, *The Evidence Amendment Act, 2017* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — *The Evidence Amendment Act, 2017* will be committed to the committee on intergovernmental justice and government affairs.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 96

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 96 — *The Choice of Court Agreements (Hague Convention Implementation) Act/Loi sur les accords d'élection de for (mise en œuvre de la***

Convention de La Haye) be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and add my thoughts to Bill No. 96, *The Choice of Court Agreements (Hague Convention Implementation) Act*. Mr. Speaker, members opposite seemed quite sad that my speech on the bill previous to this was as short and succinct as it was. They'll be disappointed to know that this is going to be a pretty short and succinct debate as well, Mr. Speaker.

But I welcome members opposite to join myself and the Minister of Justice at committee tomorrow — if this is a bill that will be going to committee tomorrow — or tune in. I'm sure it will be a very fulsome and exciting debate. And perhaps the previous minister of Justice would like to join us as well because I do know that he really misses his old file.

Mr. Speaker, this bill moves to make the Hague Convention of June 2005 on the choice of court agreements law; it makes it law in Saskatchewan. It's similar to what we're seeing happen in other jurisdictions. It allows for a better level of I guess business ability to . . . business correlation, business understanding of how . . . being able to move from jurisdiction to jurisdiction with the rules being similar, Mr. Speaker, which is why the Hague Convention was created.

In particular it allows so those who are dealing in business contracts and international litigation have a greater level of certainty, Mr. Speaker. So it makes sense for us to create this bill to allow for that level of certainty. I understand that Ontario has a similar law that they passed in March 2017. And, Mr. Speaker, these rules relate to jurisdiction agreements in civil and commercial matters and they recognize a judgment given by a court of a contracting state designated in a choice of court agreement, Mr. Speaker. And I trust the good folks in The Hague know what's going on with respect to this issue and can likely, from what I . . . when I was looking at other jurisdictions that had also passed this, that they essentially are mirroring what we're seeing in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

So I know I will have the opportunity to ask the officials about this bill and about the work that's been done with respect to the bill, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to ask them those questions as well as some questions for the minister. So as such, I will at this time move Bill No. 96, *The Choice of Court Agreements (Hague Convention Implementation) Act* to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill 96, *The Choice of Court Agreements (Hague Convention Implementation) Act* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — I designate that Bill No. 96, *The Choice of Court Agreements (Hague Convention Implementation) Act* be committed to the committee on . . . intergovernmental and justice committee.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 94

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cox that **Bill No. 94 — *The Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings (SAGES) Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today on Bill No. 94, *The Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings (SAGES) Amendment Act, 2017*. We're here today debating this bill, Mr. Speaker, because in this government's last budget a year ago, the Sask Party announced that this grant, the SAGES [Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings] grant would be suspended as of January 1st, 2018.

This program provided a grant that matched 10 per cent of the subscriber's registered education savings plan contributions up to a maximum of \$250 a year per child, with a lifetime maximum of \$4,500, Mr. Speaker. And again the government announced they would cut the grant and they'd no longer pay it on contributions made to RESPs [registered education savings plan] after December 31st, 2017. So this Act allows for the suspension of that grant program, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting to me. I've been in this place now for about eight and a half years and I was trying to do a little bit of research as to when this plan was first implemented. It had been in recent memory because I remember the debates about the implementation of this program. And, Mr. Speaker, from the best of my research here, just looking back through the Internet, I believe it came into place, the SAGES grant came into place January 1st, 2013. So it saw all of five years, Mr. Speaker, supporting . . . I understand there was about 250,000 children at that point when it came into being who could benefit from this grant. So five years for a government program where there's a bill before the legislature that passed.

This is a government who has had record revenues and offered supports at the height of record revenues and, when they had record revenues, recognized that education, at least through this mechanism, making sure that families could save for post-secondary education was important. But I don't see how it is less important in 2018, Mr. Speaker.

I know from my own experience, I'm a mother of a child who is in university — actually she's in her second year at McGill — and I can tell you that I've been saving for her education. Her dad and I have been saving for her education since the time she

was an infant, just putting a little bit of money away every month so it hurt a little bit less over the long haul. But I can tell you that, even with that diligent savings and even with the support of this grant, that it's still a challenge to pay for tuition.

I know this is a government, Mr. Speaker, that has made it harder for families to save for their kids' education, but at the same time they've cut over 5 per cent from post-secondary institutions which now means those post-secondary institutions, like the University of Saskatchewan or the University of Regina or polytechnic, have to raise tuition or cut services and sometimes a combination of both, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

So paying thousands and thousands of dollars every year for tuition and no longer having access to this grant, I think hurts lower to middle-income families a great deal, Mr. Speaker. I just going online here to . . . I'm going to look at the Canadian Scholarship Trust Plan website, Mr. Speaker, where there was a picture of the then minister of Advanced Education; who is the Attorney General, current Attorney General, with great fanfare when this program was announced. But some of the quotes by families who were pleased with this grant, I'd like to quote them. These are listed on a public website. It says, "I personally wanted a post-secondary education and went into debt to do it. I don't want the same struggles for my . . . [three-year-old] boys." So that was Lydia Cossette from Moose Jaw who said that when this grant was announced, Mr. Speaker.

Another individual says, "RESPs and incentives weren't available when I was a child so I wanted to give my son a future full of opportunity without the stress and worry of how he will pay for it [now]." That from Sarah Nunweiler in Saskatoon. Another one: "With the expensive cost of education, I don't want to be struggling to figure out when I'll be able to retire." Aaron Exner from Prince Albert. And one more, Mr. Speaker: "Saving for my son is truly the most important thing my money goes to. He deserves the opportunities I did not have." Chelsea Spence from North Battleford.

So I can tell you when that program was announced in 2012 and implemented in 2013, that those sentiments that those families expressed are no different today than they were back then, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you too that looking at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] . . . And I had the opportunity, actually, I was absent from the House two days last week, Mr. Speaker, both days to be on campus. One for a health innovation policy conference put on by med students, Mr. Speaker, and it was amazing. It wasn't med students — or students in the health sciences, pardon me — participating but they had arranged it. And certainly there were many, many people in those fields who were there, and it was an impressive bunch.

And then on Thursday of last week, I had the opportunity to judge the 3 Minute Thesis competition at the U of S, Mr. Speaker, and that's where students had three minutes to condense some of their master's or graduate school work into three minutes. And I have to say, it was an incredibly impressive bunch of students, Mr. Speaker, talking about everything from identifying and trying to prevent mental illness in pregnancy, connecting it back to conditions that the mother, the pregnant woman, experienced during pregnancy, Mr.

Speaker, and how that had long-term impacts on potential mental health.

There was a young woman, Mr. Speaker, who actually has created a system through which . . . This was above my pay grade, I have to admit. She explained it very well in three minutes though, but the gist of it is early detection of cancer. There was another woman talking about . . . And this really stuck out for me. It was a woman talking about our perceptions of Iranian women, or women who live in Muslim countries and how we have perceptions here in the West. But she talked about Canadians aren't just all about maple syrup and hockey. So she made some great parallels between those kinds of things that people from other parts of the world think about us and impressions of women in Iran.

It was amazing actually to hear all the wonderful research going on, and it really drove home the point for me that supporting our secondary institutions and supporting our students to have the opportunity to access those institutions is really important. And this is something that this government is not doing, Mr. Speaker, not doing well. And this cut to this grant, the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings, will have a real impact on the amount of money families can put away for their kids to ensure the opportunity that they can go to post-secondary institutions, whether it's college or university or whatever they choose, Mr. Speaker.

So this is again a government who's made it harder for families to save for their kids' educations while cutting university funding and forcing those post-secondary institutions to raise tuition or cut services and actually sometimes both, Mr. Speaker. You talk to anybody who works and teaches at the universities or polytechnic and you can see the pressure on those classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

I know that our post-secondary education critic, when this bill finally makes it to committee, will have some questions for the minister. I think one of them . . . I know in the last budget this was supposedly temporarily suspended, but I suspect if we've got a bill that's before us, that puts that grant on hold. I have a hard time believing that it'll come back, Mr. Speaker. So perhaps that's a question for the minister responsible in committee, to get a sense of when and if the SAGES grant will ever be reimplemented, Mr. Speaker, because it does have a positive impact on kids and families being able to afford school.

I know from my own experience, my parents . . . I'm the youngest of seven kids and there wasn't a lot of money left to save for education. And I actually just probably within the last five years paid off my student loans. I had gone back to school in my 30s as a single parent so it took a while, but I know one of my commitments to my two kids was to make sure that they had the money and the opportunity to try to get through that first degree or that first education opportunity without being burdened by too much debt, Mr. Speaker. And a cut to this grant makes it harder for families to be able to support their kids.

So I look forward to our critic's questions in committee, but with that for now I move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 94, *The Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings (SAGES) Amendment Act, 2017*.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Riversdale has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 94, *The Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings (SAGES) Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Bill No. 95

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 95 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal and Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill No. 95. Of course this bill will repeal and make some amendments to certain statutes. But before I get on and . . . The one of the areas that it's going to repeal, and I think it's interesting over time . . . I think back home to the year, you know, this certain bill or this certain, I guess, piece of legislation or even the naming of it, you know, the Enterprise Saskatchewan. When I think about that, back home, some of the challenges in economics that people were feeling, and I think of northern Saskatchewan.

But in many of the communities, they had certain . . . Economic development corporations did some great work. But the government came along. We had a new government in 2007, you know, decided to come along. And sometimes in some of our communities people didn't truly understand it, and I think about maybe my grandkids, being the age they were, they were wondering what were all the balloons about and the parades. And there was all these things happening and this was going to save Saskatchewan and, you know, it was going to be I guess truly one of the greatest things of our province.

And lo and behold, as it rolled out . . . And I've watched. There's been people appointed to the board members, and there was local regions that had their development corporations. And it was changed and those were, you know, no longer. And there was this new Enterprise Saskatchewan. And like I said, it was like a big parade and people thought . . . They were wondering what it was all about. And at the end of the day, here we are today. Not long ago, it hasn't been there very long and the government is now repealing it, saying it didn't work. It miserable failed.

Now if that's the case and they're repealing it, there was sure a lot of, like I say, I mean . . . I look at the different areas where, you know, we heard a lot of, I guess, cheers, hurrahs. There was cheerleaders everywhere. And it was a certain bill that was going to just change from, the private sector was going to take over and government would no longer . . . You had the enterprise regions that would do it, and the government wouldn't pick winners and losers. I remember hearing the stories, I mean it was unreal at the time. Time and time again we heard in this House, and many members on both sides would've talked about it. If it was a thing that was supposed to do some great thing with economic development and create jobs for the North and community, we were all for that.

And I know many people that sat on boards, maybe worked for those organizations that represented the government's so-called vision of what it wanted to see in economic development and opportunity. There were people who volunteered. There were people who worked. There were people who truly committed to that and served honourably and worked hard to try to get economics going in our regions. And I think about it. Here was a government . . . And I watched some of those people lose their jobs. And as, you know, the wind-down, whatever you want to call it — it was cancelled — and the changes that went on, it impacted a lot of the communities.

And today people are looking at the government and the government has a role with economics. And what is the role of the government? To work with industry, to work with communities to have that development going on. We're hearing it right now, and there's many struggles in areas. And I think about . . . There's areas like tourism. There's many areas that people look at government, saying how can you . . . Not dictate, you don't want to be the dictator. That's not what people want. How can you be a true partner in the economy and local regions to help regions that are suffering?

And I'll tell you, in this province with the taxes, the PST [provincial sales tax] that they have put on many communities, and local communities that have to raise taxes on their residents, with property taxes, because of the lack of support that they're getting from the Sask Party government and the government of the day. And I think as things reveal itself, it's probably going to get worse, with the way we're hearing some of the reports, some of my colleagues in question period talking about.

So if at the end of the day this was supposed to be something that the Sask Party government and at the time the premier, this was going to make his government and the province shine. Really. You know, they can sit there and see, when you're repealing it, I guess really how good . . . As I referred to people leaving, having to lose their jobs, moving out of their communities, and I've seen some of that happen, the change that happened when these enterprise regions were taken away.

But in this legislation there are many areas that they might make little changes, amendments, but that was the one area where I wanted to truly talk about, was the enterprise region and what it was, and how people, people were excited. I know back home, I know there's individuals who are entrepreneurs, hard-working. There was First Nations, Métis leaders that were a part of that. And it was a board that did some great work, and they had done great work. They were hoping this would have helped to, you know, generate economics in our regions. And man, were they disappointed as they seen the government walking away and phasing out, but giving no other supports and changing programs. And it has impacted many regions. And, you know, I don't have all the stats. I just . . .

You know, when I think back about the areas that I represent, there was some excitement at one time, but the parade's over. You know, that's done. You know, for whatever reason, it's just not, it's not going to be anymore. And this government has to take ownership of that. The way they really played this up like it was just going to save the province and save Saskatchewan, save regions and local communities with economic

development — this government has failed, failed, failed many Saskatchewan residents.

And at the end of the day, I guess, you know, you had a booming economy. We had many things happening in this province. And this government is going to have to pay the price for that, and we've said that. And I know back and forth we'll heckle and stuff, but they will pay the price. And when people see everything, you know, we're paying more and more. Saskatchewan residents are paying more, and asked every time whether it's municipal taxes going up because of the government failing.

There's only one place where you're going to get taxes, and that's our working men and women of this province. And many of our residents in this province, whether they're seniors, the cost of living is just it's unbelievable. Some of them are finding hard to bear the cost. And whether it's drugs, food, rent — what do you do, pay your utilities? We're hearing it all the time. And today it's the struggles. And I think about question period, referring to this bill and some of the challenges that many of our residents are facing.

So having said that, at this point, you know, the parade's over. We know that the government of the day will be held accountable. And the new Premier and his government will be taking stands by the leadership and local leaders. Because the local leaders have done a great job, and they will continue to do a good job. But I know they're going to be pushing pressure on the government. And it's going to be bills like that are repealing like this that people back home are looking at.

[15:30]

So we'll see where this government's going to go to help economic because right now many of our regions need the employment. And we'll see what partnership this government will say — he always talks about wanting to be partners — we'll see just how they're going to be that good partner, and we'll see how that works for many Saskatchewan residents. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I have no further comments, so I'm prepared to adjourn on Bill No. 95.

The Speaker: — The member from Cumberland has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 95, *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal and Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it . . . [inaudible] . . . adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Bill No 97

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 97 — *The Arbitration (Family Dispute Resolution) Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into adjourned debates on Bill No. 97, *The Arbitration (Family Dispute Resolution) Amendment Act, 2017*.

Although it might sound like a very informal way to settle disputes, the rules surrounding arbitration are still quite formalized. So according to section 13 of *The Arbitration Act, 1992*, a party may not revoke the appointment of an arbitrator, but arbitration also allows for mediation and other techniques. So section 36(1) says, “The members of an arbitral tribunal may, if the parties consent, use mediation, conciliation or similar techniques during the arbitration to encourage settlement of the matters in dispute.”

So this provides an option for settling the dispute outside of court if people can come to an agreement to using these methods. As someone who has Canadian Forces training in alternate dispute resolution, I understand some of these dynamics and some of the complications that can emerge when we’re talking about conflict resolution, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity this presents for families where emotions often run quite high in these situations. And many of these situations lead to costly legal battles and are quite divisive for families that are involved.

And in light of some of the 2016 Canada census numbers, I think the prevalence of these disputes, or opportunities for these disputes to exist is evident. So I want to share some of the numbers that I found: 12,905 stepfamilies existed in 2016; 2,890 children were living with grandparents; 47,215 children were living with a lone parent. So these numbers offer us a glimpse into some of the separation and divorce rates in the country, which certainly some of these situations would be covered in this bill where these separations do not occur amicably.

So this bill sets out a definition for a family arbitrator as “. . . a person who is recognized by the minister as meeting the requirements prescribed in the regulations for family arbitrators.” It also adds a definition for family dispute, meaning:

. . . a dispute between the parties respecting a matter to which one of the following applies:

- (a) Part II or IV of *The Children’s Law Act, 1997*, other than a hearing pursuant to section 12 of that Act;
- (b) *The Family Maintenance Act, 1997*;
- (c) *The Family Property Act*; [or]
- (d) *the Divorce Act* (Canada).

There are also a couple of housekeeping definitions to “court” and “minister” that have been added, and there’s no change to the definitions of “arbitrator” or “arbitration agreement”. When we refer to an arbitration agreement, we are still referring to, and I quote, “. . . an agreement by which two or more persons agree to submit a matter in dispute to arbitration.”

Some of these family disputes might include custody of children, child support and alimony which is referred to as maintenance — which I didn’t know prior to this because I do not have a legal background, but I have taken some time to learn about it, Mr. Speaker — family property disputes, and matters that relate to divorce. So this Act is proposing to change

all of those other Acts as they relate to family arbitration, Mr. Speaker.

Section 61 is also added to provide for arbitration agreements in family law disputes, provided the dispute exists, that no party took advantage of another party’s vulnerabilities or ignorance; if either party did not understand the nature of the consequences of the agreement; other circumstances that would cause the contract to be voidable under common law; or if the arbitration of the family dispute was not conducted by a family arbitrator.

There are also some provisions added in section 58.1 where the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, quoting subsection (b):

with respect to family arbitrators, prescribing the training, experience and other qualifications a person must have, and the requirements a person must meet, to be qualified as a family arbitrator.

So when the minister gave his second reading speech on this bill, he spoke about the fact that arbitration may be a viable option for some family disputes but that current legislation does not expressly allow for arbitration for these family disputes. He argues that proposed changes will establish a framework for arbitration of family disputes to fill this void. He then argues:

The bill defines family arbitrator to ensure that any individual acting as a arbitrator in a family dispute has experience not just with arbitration but specifically in the family law realm.

Now I’ve pored through this bill and the explanatory notes, Mr. Speaker, and I’m yet to find the details the minister is referring to here. It’s entirely possible that I missed it somewhere. But all I’ve found in relation to the requirements or qualifications set out for a family arbitrator is in section 58.1 which I identified earlier. So unless I’m missing something, this legislation does not set out the exact qualifications that the minister is identifying. So that’s definitely going to be a question for us in committee: what will these requirements or qualifications look like for someone to be qualified as a family arbitrator?

One of the big concerns that we have here, Mr. Speaker, is in regards to access to family arbitrators. And if these qualifications . . . They’re going to be quite important here. If the qualifications to be a family arbitrator are going to include experience in family law in particular, this certainly raises access concerns, particularly in rural and remote communities where they may not have access to a family arbitrator with a background in family law. So those are definitely some concerns that we’re interested in raising.

As my colleague from Athabasca identified, families in dispute situations are often going through a lot of pressure and stress. Providing support to these folks through arbitration could be an effective and cost-saving measure and may be quite beneficial to families in Saskatchewan. Definitely we see some possible benefits if we can successfully use arbitration for family disputes. You know, we’re talking about using alternative measures that are outside of the courthouse, saving some legal fees. It might have a more positive impact on all the parties involved, including in particular children who often get quite

involved in these situations, and might provide an opportunity to focus on some of the common values that exist within the family unit and to work together where current legislation, as the minister pointed out, doesn't expressly permit arbitration right now in family disputes.

There's also some other benefits to the fact that this is a voluntary process that we're talking about. People aren't there unless they want to be, Mr. Speaker. It can promote communication between the different parties. It can make relationships a little bit less oppositional and a little bit less hostile. And it definitely can cost less in terms of the time and the money compared to having families going to court and not dealing with the delays of court, Mr. Speaker.

As some of my other colleagues have pointed out, there's a trend to divert family disputes to arbitration. This could definitely be a more beneficial process for those involved. It obviously isn't going to work for all families in all disputes that exist, but it can be a useful tool in the tool box to be able to help families resolve some of these disputes a little bit more efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner.

But we will certainly have questions around access, particularly rural and remote access, that are related to those regulations, Mr. Speaker, and what those regulations look like. We haven't seen any clear information about what those regulations are as of yet and also what this process is actually going to look like for folks. So we'll have those questions about access and process for committee. I know my colleagues will have more to say about this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, but with that I would move to adjourn debate on Bill 97, the arbitration amendment Act, 2017.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Fairview has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 97, *The Arbitration (Family Dispute Resolution) Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 98

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 98 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Family Dispute Resolution) Amendment Act, 2017/Loi modificative diverse (résolution des conflits familiaux) de 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and enter into the debate on Bill No. 98, *An Act to amend certain Statutes respecting Family Dispute Resolution*. And I think this is a very timely one. And I appreciated the comments that were made by my colleague, just before I stood, about the issues around families in crisis.

And the numbers are actually quite staggering and quite amazing when you think of the divorces that are happening and

the outcome of that, and the fact that there are thousands of children who are put at risk because of families not being able to be whole, and in fact they become in dispute. And I think that we see it particularly in Saskatchewan, the alarming statistics around domestic violence, and particularly here in Saskatchewan.

And I know that in many ways this legislation is good. We have some questions about it. But we do also have some concerns because, while we have on our side of the House brought forward — I think twice or three times — the critic for Justice has brought forward ideas about how we could be very helpful in this area, particularly around domestic violence, and while the government has taken up some of those pieces, I can't help but think that at the end of the day, whether it be having mediation, arbitration, or if it's going to court, all of that costs families and particularly the victims.

And because this government did not choose to embrace the idea of having days where the victims could be away from work and yet receive their pay, or sometimes in fact not actually receive their pay, but in fact they would have their job and how important that is, because these things, no matter how you cut it, are not free. And while lawyers are expensive — and we get that — there are still other expenses that are involved.

And so it's important that we recognize that, and this is not the end of the discussions we have around this, and that in fact the key thing is access to justice, access to services, and particularly those who are fleeing domestic violence have access to that, and while this, it talks about family mediators and dispute resolution and it defines what family arbitrator and family mediator means.

[15:45]

We do have a lot of work ahead of us, and we look forward to hearing even more from this government in terms of the actual crisis of domestic violence and the fact that in Saskatchewan we have the highest rates in Canada. And this is something that impacts us all, impacts our economy, and when we have people who are suffering and suffering at work, suffering at home, suffering alone, and then we have the extremely unfortunate circumstance where we have children actually being victimized as well. And so I appreciate that the numbers are staggering and the fact that we can't just set that aside.

And so I want to go through some of the comments. It's always helpful, particularly for people who are at home right now who are tuning in and picking up the debates, the adjourned debates, and wanting to know a little bit more about what are we, what's the debate at hand. And of course the minister gets up. And it's important when the minister does get up because he has prepared remarks. These remarks can be used later, whether in a court case or some process where they're really wanting to understand the intention of the legislation. And so he talks about the Acts that are amended: *The Children's Law Act, 1997, The Family Maintenance Act, The Family Property Act, The Queen's Bench Act*, and so to recognize and promote early dispute resolution.

And I think that if we can, that is a worthy and lofty goal, that if we can get to that stage earlier and, as my colleague, actually,

my colleague from Riversdale, she spoke on this issue as well, talks about if you have skilled family mediators and arbitrators that in fact you can resolve these issues in a much more positive, if that can be the description, but in an effective way without involving a judge who doesn't really have a handle on the whole thing. And we can be quite tied up in some of the legalese even though, as my member from Fairview talked about, arbitration is a process and so is mediation, and you want to be in a safe space when you're doing this. There is absolutely training and it's not just a random get-together in a room and we'll work it out. It's much more than that. And so these are important things.

But it is good to see us move away from the old style of the courts in the day of when we used to threaten, "I'll see you in court" or "I'll take you to court." But this is a way of positively resolving things because at the end of the day, as we've talked about, that there are many, many people involved in this and probably most of all, the children that we want to make sure remain healthy and unharmed through these disputes processes.

So a couple of questions I do have for the, probably will have. When I look through this, the minister does not refer, I don't believe, to any kind of consultation. And I hope this has all been dealt with and there has been some forms of consultation, whether with the legal profession that has been experiencing this, other non-governmental organizations, NGOs that deal with family support that feel this is a good way to go.

I think it's important that we do have those fresh eyes that take a look at this kind of legislation and that we can make sure there are no unintended consequences, that in fact we're going to hit the mark. And while we know legislation is an imperfect tool, we don't want to be using a jackhammer when a craft hammer can be much more effective. And so I think this is important and I think that consultation is huge so there's no unintended consequences. We want to make sure that when we have this kind of suite of tools for families that are in crisis that in fact it can be used well.

The other — and I'll come back to this at the end — we're heading into the budget time right now and we can have this kind of call for more mediators, more arbitrators, but are there resources for families to access? Will we be seeing an increase in the Justice budget to help with this kind of legislation? So that in fact when people see that, hey, we've passed this legislation that is really calling for more tools for families, that in fact they can access them in a timely and effective way; so that there's not huge waiting lists or, as the member before us talked about, it only happens in the big cities or you have to travel to the big cities to do this. Because we know more and more that this is a challenging thing to do.

And of course with this government killing STC — and I don't want to go down that discussion about STC; I could be here all night. But again in terms of families getting access and services, quite often they would access STC. It would be a safe way. And we know that is actually the truth, that is not something that . . . We've heard that and we've heard that from the legal profession, where families would have to come into the cities and they couldn't access services because they couldn't get into town to get the services.

And so our province, Mr. Speaker, as you know and as certainly the folks on the other side know and we certainly know, that we need, when we provide services, there has to be equal access right across the province so that everyone can utilize the services. We know families in crisis, particularly in the smaller communities, rural communities, may be feeling more alone than ever because they are isolated. And this is something that we need to make sure, that the actual resources are available and that they're affordable. I don't know what the costs of this would be. And again the minister alluded to the fact that they'd be more accessible, but I'm not sure if that's the case.

But I want to go back for the folks who are at home here, just to review some of the things that the minister talked about. He talked about the Government of Saskatchewan being:

. . . committed to encouraging early dispute resolution methods in family law matters for the timely and cost-effective resolutions of family disputes. In some cases an out-of-court or early dispute mechanism may be more appropriate . . .

And so that's fair enough. They can achieve a fast result, be more cost effective, and have less of an emotional toll on parties. And I think that's really true, especially that emotional toll. As we know, when families are forced to go to court and it seems the court of last resort or a tool of last resort, that the ruling can have quite a huge emotional effect in terms of . . . And then at the end of the day, you have to make sure it's enforceable. And so if it can be done earlier and people buy into it, then that's a good thing.

And so there is an approved dispute resolution process before proceeding with a court process, and people would be encouraged to do that. But "Unlike in regular civil actions before the court, parties to a family law dispute are not required to participate in mandatory mediation." So they don't have to do that. "This may include mediation, but could also be satisfied by using the services of a collaborative lawyer, having attempted arbitration, or other forms of out-of-court resolution . . ."

And they will take some exceptions, and this is very important. The circumstances in which an application to the court, where any person may be denied, is where there is a history of violence, the child has been abducted, or a restraining order is in place, a party may seek an exception. So this is an important part. And it'll be interesting to see how successful this is in making sure that in fact where there is a history of domestic violence or a child's been abducted or a restraining order, that in fact that they cannot go through or do not have to go through early dispute resolution because in fact the damage has been done. The violence has occurred. The emotional toll has happened. And so the point is there has to be some finality.

There has to be a sense that justice has been served, that in fact the victims have had access and they've been heard by the court of the land to make sure that there will be a sense of justice. And not that we're looking for vengeance or anything but, I mean, a sense of due process that in fact that this is a serious, serious matter and the courts of the land will take that seriously and do not dismiss out of hand domestic violence as something light and not to be considered in these kind of things. And so

that is a good thing. That's very, very important. I think that we can all agree that there should not be a chance for these folks to get out of their responsibility.

So "Where parties choose mediation, they will be required to use the services of a family mediator." And of course "The qualifications . . . will be set out in the regulations." And there we won't know until we actually see what those regulations are. And how quickly will this come into force? Now the bill before us talks about when it comes into force on proclamation, but the challenge will be, really, what about the regulations? This all hinges on having family mediators, having family mediators who are properly trained, family mediators who have applied and been approved through the regulations. And are the regulations ready to go?

So these are some of the questions that we'll have in the committee. They'll ". . . have special training in family law and have enhanced knowledge of the conflicts that may arise in and the intricacies of family law disputes." So that's very important.

The Children's Law Act, 1997 and *The Family Maintenance Act, 1997*, it talks about a family mediator with the additional training when it relates to those two pieces of legislation — very important.

So then he talks about "Amendments to *The Children's Law Act* will also include revisions respecting parenting coordinators" and how they ". . . can offer parties in high conflict resolutions an avenue for resolution that does not involve more court applications." Now again, "Parenting coordinators are trained . . . who can help parties navigate the interpretation of an existing order or agreement such as pickup times and locations . . ." Now I'm not familiar what the history of parent coordinators are. And the minister goes on, talks about:

Parenting coordinators will not create or change parenting arrangements, the division of parenting responsibilities, custody, or access to the child. The bill will set out when the services of a parenting coordinator may be used, the types of determinations the parenting coordinator may make, and the minimum training and practice criteria . . . will need to qualify as a parenting coordinator.

Now it will be interesting to see. You know, this is fairly new to me. Like, maybe a parenting coordinator is well established, but I don't know anyone who actually is one, what their training is, what their pay is. Is it a full-time type of work? How many of them are around the province? This will be interesting to see what the minister has in mind.

And as always, this is a very good thing for us, when we get into committee that we can be asking these kind of questions because it's so critically important that . . . I think in terms of family law or domestic law or relationships that, as I said, we have such a shameful record here in Saskatchewan around domestic violence. And we need to do much more and we need to do much more quickly. And we think of the tragic situations when things go terribly wrong, deaths that have been caused through domestic violence, that this is not a small thing, that in fact this is a very, very important piece of legislation before us.

[16:00]

So as some of us have indicated, we're very keen about making sure that we can get to work on this and see that this can have effects and has a positive effect in our families right across this province. The question though before us, I mean really will be two or three. One, when does it come into effect? How quickly can we get these people . . . You know, I'm familiar with mediators, arbitrators. But parenting coordinators, I've not been very familiar with. And maybe that's a well-established field, but I know that this is something that, if they can be helpful then that would be a fantastic thing.

But at the end of the day too, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, the key will be the resources that will ensure that there are these resources. Who pays for the parenting coordinator? Is that something that will be billed out to people or is it a public service that we can see who pays for these services? And will that be handled in an effective way?

We can look at financial supports that we often don't see being paid. And of course in many ways we have a pretty effective unit within Justice, I believe, who looks after collecting delinquent family supports. But that's not an easy thing to do because some of the — I don't know what you call them — deadbeat dads or whatever, who try to avoid the payments, go to quite some lengths to avoid their responsibility. And so this is something that we have, and as the minister referred to them as a strong suite of tools that can be used for family disputes. That's, as I said right at the very beginning, a very worthwhile goal that we can all support. But let's not make it something that somebody reads about on a website and then phones up for access to it and finds out that in fact it hasn't been supported, that in fact there is not the resources there for it.

And I really do worry in a lot of ways that many of these things that this government has done have been hollow tools because they are just not there for the time. And I think about the different initiatives they have come forward with, and we've had to call them out on that in question period and others because they're just not there. And families are expecting more supports because the government has taken some time to promote it. And I know this minister is deeply, deeply committed to family law and justice for those who are in vulnerable circumstances. But as we had heard from the member from Fairview, the sheer numbers of children and families that are in dispute is a significant challenge here in this province. And are they willing to step up to the plate and deliver not only the legislation but the dollars and the resources and the people to make sure that it will be done and will be done in a completely effective manner.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I know there's lots of legislation before us this afternoon and we want to get to that. But as I said, when we get to Bill No. 98, *An Act to amend certain Statutes respecting Family Dispute Resolution*, the minister needs to come to the committee well prepared with answers about what the government is doing around family disputes. But the ugly, ugly way it manifests, from the extreme of violence, the tragedies we've seen, deaths related to family violence, what are we doing about that? What can we do more about that? Have they prioritized these things or will there be resources in place?

This is not a small thing. People . . . And we know this from our conversations, and our own critic for Justice has been working

many months on this, on family and interpersonal violence, domestic violence. And I've been happy, been happy to support her in that work. And whether it's been housing, making sure people fleeing domestic violence have the ability to leave and break leases that otherwise might be punishing in terms of the amount that is owed . . . And the government picked that up and ran with that. That was good. And so we see them taking up some of the pieces, but we did not see them take up the piece around being able to have days in their workplace to the extent they needed to be.

And as I said, in Saskatchewan this is a very, very big issue and one that is not just in passing interest, but I think should be one of, if not the biggest challenges that the Minister of Justice sees on his plate and really wants to step up and do the right thing.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I know many of us will want to speak and we'll have questions in committee. But I think people will want to get on record their thoughts on Bill No. 98, *An Act to amend certain Statutes respecting Family Dispute Resolution*. I move that we adjourn debates on this bill this evening. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 98, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Family Dispute Resolution) Amendment Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 99

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 99 — *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2017 (No. 2)/Loi modificative n° 2 de 2017 sur l'interprétation*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill No. 99, *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2017*, getting into the Act itself and what it's going to, I guess, try to do and what the government is trying to accomplish.

When we look at Bill 40, and Bill 40 in itself, government said . . . and at the time, you know, I believe it was the premier at the time said in order for this to wind down, sell off, get rid of, whatever it was they were going to be done to STC, they needed this Act to do certain things. And the government went ahead with this Act, even though we've had many people from across the province were very concerned with where the government was going. And they talked about privatization, and that was clear. People were very concerned about privatization.

But before I get into some of the details and what they're referring to, I think it's important to talk about STC, and to many great workers that were out at STC and many of the depots and the communities that, you know, took care of customers, bought tickets, parcel express that came through STC to many of the communities. And I think about that and some of those community members back in my communities

that I represent, but not only in the communities I represent, in many of the rural communities, the isolated communities in the North, but also in the urban centres, and I think it's somewhere around, if a person . . . I think it's about 90 per cent of Saskatchewan residents, if they chose and made the decision that they wanted to have access to STC, they could have done that or they could have used it for parcel express. They could have done that. They had access to that service.

So when we see how a great service it was and the great work that it did, and at the end of the day you've heard from different leaders, you've heard from many resident seniors, those most vulnerable when it comes to people with disabilities and having access to STC, those with medical problems that rode STC, and I think there's many of them. I've had people saying, cancer patients. I know that there was some, you know, back home that that's how they travelled. They travelled to Saskatoon on STC and used that service.

So it was a great service that this province had an opportunity, and to see the government do what it'd done with legislation that it brought forward, and the legislation that was brought forward gave them the opportunity . . . and whether it's sell-off, wind-down, everybody will have, you know, their own interpretation as far as what they're saying. Government will have their version of what they want the public to see. But when you go talk to the public and you're sitting around people's tables and you see, man, I hear still to this day — and you'll see on social media — the people that still miss STC and are saying they're so upset and angry with the government, the way the government handled STC and the sell-off of one of our Crowns, our most precious Crowns that the government decided to sell off.

So people are concerned, and they were concerned when Bill 40 came forward. And the governments even talk about privatizing, and I know that, you know, I've heard from the government's side many times back and forth which . . . you know, heckle back and forth. I understand that, that, you know, fearmongering and all the other stuff. Well I think the people got to see exactly what was going on. And I think, you know, the government heard, and the Premier I believe made comments about that — he's heard the people, and he was going to repeal Bill 40.

Well along comes Bill 40 that gave the government at the time the opportunity to wind down, sell off the assets of STC. And we see today on the auction block, and we see exactly the damage and we're feeling the damage. And the government at the time said the private sector would take over. Oh, don't worry about it, you know. We don't need to have this subsidy; the private sector will take over. And let me reassure the government of the day, the private sector has not taken over. And you have left many people in our province — in rural and north, urban — very, very unhappy with you for the way you've handled that. And there is no service being provided to them. There is no private sector taking over providing for those that really need to travel.

So having said that, this government of the day will have to wear that. And I hope come election time, and at any time that people respond to this government and show them the way they were treated, the way you treated the most vulnerable . . . And

we've seen that.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, having said the way that they carried on STC . . . And many people wrote them letters, and I know that. And I even know that, you know, some of the leadership candidates would've got correspondence on, you know, some of them would've got people saying, concern. So you know, we never heard what their stand would be. Would they bring back STC should, you know, a new premier be in?

So we're still waiting to see what the new Premier will do. Maybe he will say it's time to revisit it and do something, and I hope he would. I know on this side of the House, we know from the good people of our province are saying, they're demanding something be done. What exactly that will look like, we'll have to see at the end of the day. But I know that the people need a service to provide them, especially when the private sector did not take over and isn't taking over for whatever reason.

And I know the bigger centres, Regina, Saskatoon, I don't know exactly, but I know it's in the millions of subsidies that they get. Yet this government didn't want to subsidize the whole province, this whole province . . . STC would've been 12 to \$10 million. They fought on that. So I don't know what was behind that, but they've done what they've done. And you know, I've said this before — governments come and governments go. And we'll see what happens.

Now the government's saying they're changing and they're getting rid of Bill 40, and then all of a sudden, but there's parts they want to keep. There's parts of Bill 40 they want to keep; there's a reason why. Is it the part that allowed them to dissolve? And they talk about that, windup, dissolution of a Crown corporation. So there are many, you know, when we close or get rid of . . . I mean, people's interpretations of that . . . Sometime I think they're going to want to have government . . . I know in committee we're going to have an opportunity, and my colleagues will have an opportunity to ask the government some questions. But at the end of the day it isn't strictly the concerns and the questions we have. It's what residents have asked us to ask of this government of the day.

The government is supposed to represent all people. So we're hoping at the end of the day they'll be able to explain exactly why we have the legislation we have, and why did they wind it down? And if you say you're going to get rid of the Bill 40, why do you keep parts of it? You know, you pick and choose what you want. And I think some people are really finding that very odd. Like, why would you keep parts of it? Because they want to have their definition.

So I think we'll have an opportunity for more questions. We'll go into committee and we'll get those, and hopefully we can get some answers as to why the government . . . And maybe we'll find out later there's a reason why. It might be a good reason. I'm not sure. At this point I just know people are watching. They're very concerned, which we are concerned . . .

[16:15]

Any time you have a government saying they're not going to do something but they have legislation, or they're amending it, there's an opportunity for them to do what . . . And I think

sometimes the residents of our province want answers. And hopefully we can get some of the answers and find out why they just didn't take Bill 40 and scrap it totally, in light of the concerns that they heard from Saskatchewan residents, that they don't want their Crowns messed with in any way.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, I have got an opportunity to say a few comments about that, but I also wanted to, you know, stress the concern that . . . Many people out of our good province, and the good people of our province, are concerned about STC. And when, when is some service going to come back to them? Because the private sector did not take over as the government said, oh, reassured them that, you know, the private sector will take over. Well that's not happening. You know, that goes on the government's shoulders to take care of it.

So now the government can hopefully take care of it. And I encourage people: don't give up. Don't quit sending letters to your MLAs, to the Premier, to the ministers. Ask them. They owe you that. They owe that to the people of this province. You said the private sector would take over. It's not happening. You have an obligation now to the people that elect you and the people that you represent in this whole province, from the South to the North to the East to the West. You have an obligation to represent those people. So I would encourage them to get a hold of their MLAs, the Premier. Send letters to the ministers, and asking them to explain how they are going to provide this service that they said the private sector would do.

So with that, I don't have any further comments, Mr. Speaker. So I'm prepared to adjourn debate on Bill No. 99.

The Speaker: — The member from Cumberland has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 99, *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2017 (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 103

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 103 — *The Land Contracts (Actions) Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it is my pleasure this afternoon to rise and enter into debate on Bill No. 103, *The Land Contracts (Actions) Act, 2017*. I will make a similar confession as did my colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre and preface my comments by stating that I am not a lawyer either. I know that comes as some surprise, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to say that there are a number of things that I appreciate about some of the . . . not only the minister's statements in second reading, but also the report by the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan, the supporting document or the document that sort of brought about these changes to the land contracts Act, Mr. Speaker.

In second reading comments by the minister — and I'm just going to come to those — it was noted that this Act came out of this report, Mr. Speaker, that there was a report that was put forward in 2014 at the request of the then minister looking at the land contracts Act. So back in 2014, in fact March of 2013 in fact as it states on the front of that paper, there were a number of recommendations that were made with regard to this Act.

So when we're talking about the land contracts Act, I suppose there's a few things that we should make clear as we're talking about it and what the intent of it is. This bill changes foreclosure proceedings in the province, Mr. Speaker, and it doesn't deal with farm mortgages, I think is a major clarification that should be made.

It notes that we require a pre-action process for foreclosure, which is set out as a bit of a protection for the person who has the mortgage. And in fact this piece of legislation goes back 70 years. It came in as a bit of consumer protection piece of legislation. And I think it's reasonable after 70 years and perhaps more frequently that we go back and make sure that legislation passed in this Assembly is still meeting the needs, the current needs. So I do sincerely appreciate this report and the thoroughness of it, Mr. Speaker.

Some things change if this bill passes and some things remain the same. One of the things that remains the same is the time period between the notice and the hearing, which is 60 days I believe, if memory serves. But it also proposes to repeal two bills so I think that's something that always when we're looking at repealing legislation, it requires probably a higher level of oversight.

The first one that is proposed to be repealed is *The Home Owners' Protection Act*, deemed to be no longer be relevant. This was, if I remember correctly, a very specific piece of legislation that came in in the '80s when we were witnessing a number of foreclosures. The other is *The Agreements of Sale Cancellation Act*, and elements of that Act are proposed to be moved into this new bill, Mr. Speaker. So those are some of the substantive changes that are proposed here. And again this bill takes into consideration recommendations done from a report by the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan.

Just to highlight a little bit of this work, if people haven't had a chance to look at the work of the Law Reform Commission, it is worth a look, Mr. Speaker. In fact it's very helpful in terms of the appendices around looking at cross-jurisdictional issues. It does a bit of a case study and looks at what's going on in other jurisdictions across Canada and does a bit of a side-by-side comparison there, Mr. Speaker. With limited time sometimes that we have in this Assembly to discuss bills, I think that that is very important background, not only for members on the government side and the minister, but also for members on this side so we can fulfill our role of oversight. So I do want to give a little nod of appreciation to those who have compiled this work. It also goes through some of the concerns with the existing legislation and makes some proposals with regard to changes.

And you know, when we're talking about foreclosure of someone's home, Mr. Speaker, this is, you know, as you would

imagine, a highly charged . . . very important to get right. And again, I noted earlier in my comments that this is intended to provide some level of protection for those who carry the mortgage, homeowners, Mr. Speaker. And I think it is very important that we do provide that level of protection. When you think about someone in the process of potentially losing their home, that is often, you know, the main asset that any person or any family in this province has. It's often the retirement plan for many families who, you know, may not have investments elsewhere. This is the main investment.

And of course, there are all sorts of I mean practicalities about owning your own home, and you know, memory making and family. I mean all of us have very strong memories, I'm sure, and attachments to home, so I bring that in. Maybe you can tell again that I'm a bit more of a social worker than a lawyer but I think that those things, they are important and I make no apologies for that, Mr. Speaker.

But when I was doing my research for this bill, I came across something that's given me some real, real pause. Again I learn things every day in this job, Mr. Speaker, but one of the things that I learned very recently is that the Canadian Bankers Association keeps a very detailed list of the number of foreclosures or mortgages in arrears in any jurisdiction in any province in Canada. And it has quite an extensive list — comes out, I believe, quarterly — in every province. So there's a national number, percentage, and then province by province, and it keeps very detailed lists. And they do have the website there. There's comments from aside here that are . . . This is very important and I think the people of the province would want to hear this.

So when this legislation was introduced, it was November of 2017, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps ironically, perhaps just by serendipity, I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, is when we also received . . . November 2017 was also when we received the latest update from the Canadian Bankers Association with regard to the percentage of arrears to total number of mortgages in each of the jurisdictions. So the Canadian overall rate is point two four per cent. So percentage of mortgages in Canada that are in arrears, arrears as defined by three months or more in nonpayment, Mr. Speaker, the national average is point two four per cent.

And of course, Atlantic Canada has been going through some difficult times. They're resource dependent. Their rate is point five four per cent, Mr. Speaker. Some other jurisdictions fare a little better. Quebec is right around the national average. Ontario, there's a very low rate, point nine per cent. Alberta of course, you know, they've also gone through some difficult times with a downturn in the resource economy as has Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Their rate is a little bit above the national average at point four three per cent, but BC [British Columbia] at point one six per cent.

But what was really surprising, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Saskatchewan's rate is point seven four per cent, three times the national average. And that I think should give us all some concern. Of course we're still talking less than a percentage, but three times the national average I don't think is . . . We're not on the right end of this one, Mr. Speaker. And any time we're talking about mortgage rates and foreclosures, you know, I do

have some concern about what even a slight increase to interest rates might do to that rate in our province, a rate that is already three times the national average.

And certainly I can understand where some of those pressures are coming from. I know like many people in this Assembly have spent a lot of time on the doorstep and talking to people across this province, and they are feeling a lot of pressure, a lot of pressure around affordability. And some of that, you know, some of that, to be fair, is a result of lower oil prices but also to be fair, also because of decisions made directly by this government. And I'm just going to pause for a second here.

Homeowners have a limited, often you know, have tight budgets. We've seen a number of — I believe it's five — SaskPower increases in the last couple of years. That has cut into affordability, home affordability for people across the province. The latest budget, we have seen PST on home insurance. Of course municipal budgets have also come forward with significant tax increases. And I think, without exception they have indicated that at least part . . . I know when my municipal tax bill came there was a portion set aside, highlighted very strongly, that was attributed directly to cuts to municipalities from the provincial government, Mr. Speaker.

And all of these things do impact the affordability of homes in the province. So hopefully we are just getting the foreclosure processes in order as a matter of process and just, you know, in good practice cleaning up legislation, making it more simple, modernizing it.

But I hope that we're not also doing that in anticipation of, you know, an influx of people who need these protections. I certainly hope not, Mr. Speaker. But given that we have three times the national rate of mortgages in arrears, I think that's something that we should not take lightly. You know, any time we're three times on the wrong end of any statistic — which happens unfortunately a little too frequently when we think of things like domestic violence and rates of drinking and driving — I think that it's something that we should set our minds to fixing, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

Of course, you know, increased costs have not been the only pressure on families and affordability of homes in this province. We've seen downward pressure on wages, particularly public sector wages, but there's an impact around the province. I'm not sure exactly where we're at despite, you know, sitting in this Assembly and listening intently. I'm not sure exactly where we're at with that 3.5 per cent reduction mandate. But it certainly does, it does factor into the affordability of homes. And of course, Mr. Speaker, if you don't have a job it's very, very difficult to maintain your mortgage payments. And that's something that we've seen.

To be fair of course, within the resource sector, those connected to the resource sector jobs and also folks who, you know, we know very closely — the cleaners who we worked with very closely in this building, teachers and EAs [educational assistants] in classrooms . . . Unfortunately we've been told to expect another challenging budget, which I'm afraid means that more people are going to lose their jobs in this province, Mr.

Speaker.

So when people are in arrears on their mortgages and they're losing their homes, it doesn't do great things for the economy. Of course it has implications for the real estate market. It has impact with regards to neighbourhoods, schools, all of those things, Mr. Speaker. So again, as I said, I hope that we are just modernizing this Act and acting on some of the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission. But I do have concerns about that statistic, and I'd like to look a little bit further into that website and the history.

Perhaps, you know, we hear a lot about what was happening a decade ago in this province. For a little bit of a history lesson, perhaps it would be interesting for folks to know that in 2007 the rate for Saskatchewan — remembering that today it's point seven four per cent of total mortgages — in 2007 that number was point three per cent. So that number has more than doubled in the last decade in this province. So that's a number of mortgages that are in arrears.

So I think when we are, you know, we are taking stock of the last decade, I think we need to give a full and fair accounting of things that are going on. And this is certainly something that is not moving in the right direction and is not the type of area, economic indicator that we want to be on this side of, Mr. Speaker — three times the national average.

With regard to the legislation itself there were, as I've mentioned, a number of recommendations that were put forth. There were some stakeholder consultations that were conducted before this report was compiled and released in 2013. And I know that our critic, who is a very capable woman, will be doing her due diligence and contacting some of those stakeholders and going very carefully. In fact she probably already has; she's that diligent, Mr. Speaker. And I know that she'll have a lot to say in committee and ask the questions that competent women such as herself always do, Mr. Speaker. But I will leave that to her in committee.

And I think with that will conclude my remarks on Bill No. 103, and I will move to adjourn.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Lakeview has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 103, *The Land Contracts (Actions) Act, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 104

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 104 — *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2017/Code des droits de la personne de la Saskatchewan de 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter discussion today on Bill No. 104, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2017*. I think it's important to start by looking to the minister's second reading speech and just pointing out exactly what the Human Rights Code does and what it is. And just to look at his remarks, I think he says this quite succinctly, that it's:

... essential legislation that promotes and protects individual dignity and equality rights. The code prohibits discrimination based on grounds set out in the code and also includes a bill of rights, making it illegal for someone to violate another person's fundamental rights and freedoms.

So I just want to take us to Part 1, the Bill of Rights here. So it outlines in Part 1 of this particular piece legislation, it outlines the right to freedom of conscience, which is:

Every person and every class of persons shall enjoy the right to freedom of conscience, opinion and belief and freedom of religious association, teaching, practice and worship.

The second point under the Bill of Rights is the right to free expression:

Every person and every class of persons shall, under the law, enjoy the right to freedom of expression through all means of communication, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the arts, speech, the press or radio, television or any other broadcasting device.

The next point, the right to free association:

Every person and every class of persons shall enjoy the right to peaceable assembly with others and to form with others associations of any character under the law.

The next point, the right to freedom from arbitrary imprisonment:

Every person and every class of persons shall enjoy the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention.

And the final point under the Bill of Rights — that would be Part 1 of our human rights legislation — is:

Every qualified voter resident in Saskatchewan shall enjoy the right to exercise freely his or her franchise in all elections and shall possess the right to require that no Legislative Assembly shall continue for a period in excess of five years.

The second part is the prohibition of certain discriminatory practices, Mr. Speaker. And then it goes on in other sections to talk about administration of that bill.

But in particular, this bill before us today, Bill 104, makes the Human Rights Code bilingual, as we've seen here in my time here in the House and prior to it, that the government of the day moves to try to follow our official bilingualism policy and move our bills to being bilingual.

This bill also makes several changes to language throughout the Act but does not change the content of the code. For example, it changes the word "if" to "where," and "shall enjoy the right to" changes to "has the right to."

I think it's important to take a look at human rights complaints. Actually, you know what? I'd like to talk about discrimination or what prohibited grounds actually means. So we've got several different pieces under prohibited grounds. Actually we added one. I know my colleague from Saskatoon Centre worked really hard on adding gender identity and worked with the then minister to get that particular piece added. I know he would've liked to have seen the government go a little further on gender expression. So prohibited grounds here: religion, creed, marital status, family status. So family status is the status of being in a parent and child relationship. Sex is another prohibited ground, and that's discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and pregnancy-related illnesses deemed to ... on the basis of sex. We've got sexual orientation, disability, age, colour, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, race or perceived race, receipt of public assistance and, as I said, gender identity. So those are prohibited grounds, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to go to the report, actually the Human Rights Commission's annual report, to talk about some of the complaints that have come before, in terms of numbers that have come before the Human Rights Commission. So the total number of complaints in the 2016-2017 year were 444. The total number of complaints formalized in 2016-2017 were 141.

It's interesting when we look at some of the larger categories that stick out. So disability was the highest number, which was 63.1 in terms of the grounds for complaints. Areas in which I'm interested in, just through my own work and particularly interested at this time of the Me Too movement and Time's Up movement, we had a 17 per cent rate or percentage of complaints were based around sexual harassments, an area in which I'm very interested in my work.

I'll talk about this in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, but before being elected for about three years I worked in a little unit of government called the work and family unit, under the Department of Labour. And we actually put together a booklet, which I'm quite proud of and I'll talk a little bit about that too, called *Pregnancy, Parenting and the Workplace*, which was a booklet for employers and employees to both understand their rights and responsibilities because those two things are very tied together.

But that area that really interests me is discrimination on the basis of sex, particularly around pregnancy, which saw 11.3 per cent of the complaints to the Human Rights Commission were based on that, and 4.3 per cent were on family status.

So I'm just going to give you a couple of examples from the annual report on what those might look like, and I'd like to talk a little bit further about those too. I come to this legislature actually as a parenting advocate. I am a midwifery advocate, a breastfeeding advocate, and an advocate generally for families to make sure they have the support they need to be the best possible parents and to raise healthy children.

And around the breastfeeding piece, that is actually something

that, still to this day, that it is actually technically protected — the right to breastfeed is technically protected under our human rights legislation. It's not explicitly laid out, but it's on the basis of sex, when it comes to pregnancy, and subsequently after pregnancy comes feeding your child, Mr. Speaker. And still to this day I've been quite connected in that world of parents, and mothers in particular, who nurse their kids for a very long time and who are also breastfeeding advocates.

And it still amazes me that women get asked to go feed their child in a washroom stall, or get told that they can't nurse their child or feed their child in a public setting. That is in fact prohibited, and that happens fairly frequently. You see the news stories pop up, but discrimination on the basis of sex, particularly around pregnancy, continues to happen. And the fact that we have as many complaints that we do, that is a high number.

So I'll just talk in the section on his report around . . . the Commissioner's report around mediation, which is one of the pillars of our Human Rights Commission. He mentions, there's a particular anecdote: "Time away from work for child's healthcare a family status issue." So this is the anecdote:

A month after Jeremy started working for his employer, he asked for a week off work due to an emergency medical assessment and treatment for his young son.

Throughout, Jeremy kept his supervisor apprised of what was happening, and the time he needed off. After this week away, he approached his manager with a doctor's note to request 2 additional weeks while his son was being treated. The manager asked him to wait for a few minutes, and then returned with a letter of termination.

The employer said that there were some performance concerns that factored in to their decision to terminate the complainant's employment. Parties agreed to \$12,000.00 in compensation for damage to dignity, and the respondent provided a letter of reference.

So that was managed to be solved through mediation, but you can't terminate a person while they're on leave. That is a discrimination based on family status. Here's another example: "Complaint over pregnancy-related termination resolved."

Jenna was a young adult who had been working for a chemical manufacturing company for 4 months when she learned that she was pregnant. She experienced complications and had to be hospitalized. Although she returned to work, she was occasionally absent because of illness. The employer was aware of Jenna's pregnancy and expressed concern about her complications and her age. Her supervisor also asked Jenna to consider resigning.

Medical complications meant that Jenna was away from her job, and she was terminated the day before she was supposed to return to work. Jenna filed a complaint because she believed her employer had not accommodated her on the basis of age, disability, and pregnancy, contrary to Section 16 of the Code. The parties settled the complaint with a total payment of \$27,500 for damage to dignity, expenses, and release of the right to reinstatement.

So discrimination on the basis of sex . . . I think discrimination in all cases is not good, Mr. Speaker, but like I said, I come to the place where my own background is in this particular area, and it interests me that this is still a very big issue.

So what is discrimination? It's the harmful treatment . . . So I'm going to take you to the pamphlet, or it's actually a booklet that I was involved with when I was with the work and family unit, called *Pregnancy, Parenting and the Workplace*, again which was a guide for both employers and employees to make sure that both knew their rights and responsibilities.

[16:45]

Discrimination is the harmful treatment of an individual or group, based on certain personal characteristics. *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* establishes which characteristics (or "prohibited grounds of discrimination") are covered. [And we've already talked about that.] They include sex, pregnancy and family status. [So this was a book specific to this topic.] Discrimination does not need to be intentional to be illegal. For example, a rule or a policy may be developed for good business reasons but have an unintended, negative effect on pregnant employees. Discrimination can be built right into systems or standard business practices. For instance, a company may require all employees to work full-time and meet the same physical demands. A pregnant employee may need lighter duties, shorter hours or other changes in order to keep on working. Often, indirect discrimination occurs when an employer does not meet the duty to accommodate . . . [which is discussed later on in the handbook].

So again, discrimination based on sex, because sex includes ". . . discrimination because of pregnancy, pregnancy-related illness, childbirth, or any circumstance related to pregnancy or childbirth [which includes breastfeeding]."

What is discrimination based on family status? So family status again ". . . means the status of being in a parent and child relationship. [But] "Parent" and "child" are interpreted broadly to include anyone acting in those roles."

So some examples . . . Actually family status back when this pamphlet was written or booklet was written, in 2006, was a relatively new addition to human rights law and there were still questions at that time. But some examples are that:

. . . employers cannot discriminate against an employee for some of the following reasons:

she or he is a parent. (e.g., refusing to hire someone because he or she has children)

he or she is the child or parent of a particular person (e.g., firing someone because of a dispute with the employee's parent)

[and] negative attitudes or stereotypes about employees with family obligations (e.g. refusing promotions or training opportunities to parents on the assumption that they will take more time off work or be less committed to their jobs than employees without children).

This is all really important as more women move into the workplace. Obviously the Human Rights Code protects all employees and all people in Saskatchewan, but when it comes to employment, it had specific relevance or has specific relevance as more women are in the workplace.

And I still hear issues where a woman in an interview was asked if she's planning on having children. So I think a little, important little piece in this pamphlet on page 48 is:

Can an employer ask job applicants about their plans to have children?

Most employers know they can't refuse to hire someone for a discriminatory reason. But the *Code* also prohibits questions that might lead to employers eliminating job applicants simply because of their potential to become parents. Employers cannot ask job applicants about sex, family status or marital status on application forms or in interviews. For example, employers should be careful not to:

advertise for childless employees or indicate they prefer them

ask applicants if they are pregnant, or using birth control

[or] ask applicants about their plans to marry, or to have or adopt children

The Human Rights Code and this piece of legislation, which is modestly being amended again just to be bilingual and to make some relatively minor language changes, is a really important piece of legislation for people here in Saskatchewan. And I think human rights legislation is an ever-growing body, or should be an ever-growing body of work where we're reflective in thinking about how we make sure that the most vulnerable in our society are protected and that we all know our rights and responsibilities.

I know that there's some concern around the number of complaints coming forward to the Human Rights Commission has increased over time and, like I said, it still amazes me that there's that high of a number around, while the complaints around disability and ancestry ... Actually, our Aboriginal ancestry is 2.1 per cent.

So I would actually, I think that number should lead us to think if everybody who is protected under the Human Rights Code feels comfortable and confident making complaints, Mr. Speaker, because I know in my office and in my daily interactions with people, I hear that racism is a real concern for indigenous people here in this province. And so having that number of 2.1 per cent of total complaints because of Aboriginal ancestry, I wonder if there's ways that the Human Rights Commission could do its work to make sure that everyone feels comfortable coming forward.

Around other ancestry, it's about 7.8 per cent. But like I said, I am fascinated and frankly appalled around the piece around sexual harassment, which is at 17 per cent, and then pregnancy and family status. But it's important to remember how very critical this kind of legislation is to all of us here in

Saskatchewan and that it's an evolving document over time.

I would have liked to have seen breastfeeding actually explicitly added at some point in time under sex, but who knows, that might come at some point in time. And perhaps gender expression will make it in there at some point in time as well.

But with that, Mr. Speaker, I know that the critic will have some questions in committee when this bill gets there, for Bill No. 104, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2017*. But with that, at this point in time I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Riversdale has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 104, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 105

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 105 — *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to join in with debate and so today I'm going to join in with Bill No. 105, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Consequential Amendment Act*. And it's always nice to follow up when another colleague is talking about the Act, because it's really good to hear their perspective of the changes that'll be happening.

So we know that this Act accompanies *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2017* and makes consequential amendments to the Saskatchewan employment code. And so, Mr. Speaker, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* is being repealed and replaced with a new bilingual statute, which I think is wonderful when we can include our French language in some of our legislation as well. And so therefore references to the name of the old Act in the Saskatchewan employment code will be updated to reference the new Act. So oftentimes some of the changes that we make will affect other legislation that we have, and in this case that's what's happening.

So the importance about the Human Rights Code is that it enforces the code through the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is individuals who've been appointed so that if there has been an infringement or a concern, they do an investigation with that. And I was looking up to see who was on that committee and I was pretty impressed that they're quite the diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds and education and experiences. So I think we all can have a lot of confidence in their abilities to make these decisions.

And the Human Rights Code is very important too because the job of it is to protect and promote human rights and discourage discrimination against everyone living in Saskatchewan. So we know that that's so very important. And as we're progressing in our world, we know that it's important to respect each other in our diverse communities in society.

And so some of the protection against discrimination would be because of religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, colour, nationality, and many other examples. And so people are protected against discrimination in their workplace, in education, when they're applying for services, or even when they're receiving public services. We've got to ensure that people have access to services. And there's many other areas that we have to really identify if there is a form of discrimination and ensure that all people have ability to receive services when they need it and not be judged or taken advantage of based on who they are. So that's a little bit of background with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, one thing that I wanted to talk a little bit about was *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and the importance of that. Mr. Speaker, with the changes to the House here with our new leader officially there of the opposition, some of our critic areas were changed and one of my critic areas that was added to my portfolio was Labour and Workers' Compensation Board and ensuring workplace safety. And so I'm really excited to have this new portfolio and looking forward to working with individuals across our province who are in the workplace, and we know that includes everybody.

And so *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, it protects the health and safety of Saskatchewan workers. So it's very important and it ensures there's a minimum standard of safety in employment and standards for employers in these employments. And it improves the compliance with regulatory standards and it also ensures effective enforcement of labour laws in the province.

So this is a very important Act and everybody is governed under it. Same with *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. And so both of these Acts work together to ensure that we have health and safety for all workers, minimum standards and regulatory standards and effective enforcement. So I think this is an important amendment to be had. It's really important for us to really take these Acts seriously.

And when we look at all the employees in our province and some of them have maybe some union representation that helps them ensure that their rights are being represented, but these Acts apply to everybody even if they aren't in unionized jobs, which would be a lot of people in our communities. We've got to also ensure that their workplaces are safe and that their employers are held accountable to ensure that they have safe workplaces, that their employer has to treat them with respect. And so that's very important.

And we need to know that there's the level of accessibility for individuals who need that. And I think in Saskatchewan we have a long ways to go with regards to that kind of stuff. But we're making some progress, but we've got to be mindful of accessibility. And I think even in this building there's some areas here that are not very accessible for individuals and we've

got to be mindful for that.

And I think with a lot of changes within our communities like with having dogs that might be accompanying people who have post-traumatic stress disorder, some of those individuals have faced interesting complications when they're going to, say, restaurants and people saying no dogs are allowed. And then they explain, they have to explain their disorder. And we really hope one day we get to a point that people don't have to explain that.

So I think with changes with these Acts will help with that, and I look forward to . . . I know the critic with regards to this portfolio will consult with the stakeholders and she has lots of questions for the minister in the committee. So I'll move to adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member for Prince Albert Northcote has moved to adjourn debate on *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*, Bill No. 105. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, so that a committee may sit tonight, I will move a motion that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — This House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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