



FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

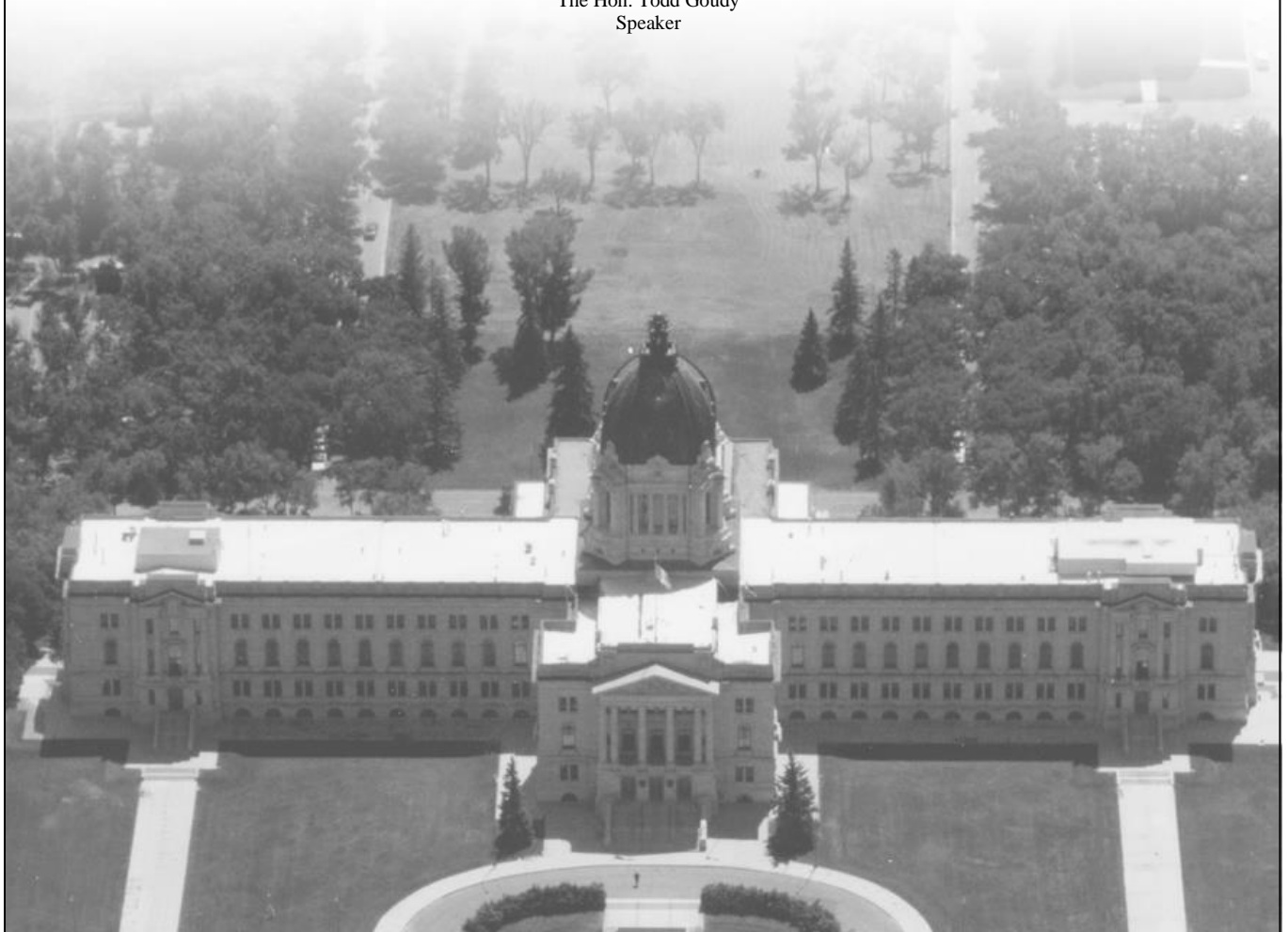
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 30th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — Her Honour the Honourable Bernadette McIntyre, S.O.M.

Speaker — Hon. Todd Goudy
Premier — Hon. Scott Moe
Leader of the Opposition — Carla Beck

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Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Schmalz, Hon. Eric — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Senger, Brittney — Saskatoon Southeast (NDP)
Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Teed, Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Thorsteinson, James — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)
Warrington, Darcy — Saskatoon Stonebridge (NDP)
Weedmark, Kevin — Moosomin-Montmartre (SP)
Weger, Michael — Weyburn-Bengough (SP)
Wilson, Sean — Canora-Pelly (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Mount Royal (NDP)
Young, Aleana — Regina South Albert (NDP)
Young, Hon. Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 34; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 27

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

Speaker Goudy: — Why is the minister on his feet?

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself and a member opposite, we'd like to jointly ask for leave to make a statement regarding the National Day of Mourning for workers who were killed, injured, and suffered illness on the job.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

COMMEMORATIVE STATEMENTS

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in commemoration of the National Day of Mourning. This is a day to recognize workers who have lost their lives due to workplace injury or illness. On behalf of the government, I offer our deepest condolences to the family, friends, colleagues, and communities who are mourning the loss of a loved one due to a workplace fatality. In recognition of this day, the flags at the Legislative Assembly and other government buildings are flying at half-mast.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in the legislature, as well as people throughout Saskatchewan, take a moment to honour the lives lost and that we all work together to take action to prevent workplace injuries and fatalities. Health and safety must always take priority in whatever we do. This is the only way we can ensure that everyone comes home safely at the end of the day.

In 2024, 27 claims for workplace-related fatalities were accepted in the province. Mr. Speaker, I cannot express how unfortunate it is when families, friends, and colleagues are left to mourn the lives of workers who never returned home after going to work. Everyone grieves loved ones in different ways, and we want to be respectful of the families' wishes. So today we have consent to read aloud the names of 24 of the 27 individuals who lost their lives to a workplace illness or injury.

I ask that all members please rise while I read the names of the following workers who lost their lives due to a workplace injury or illness:

Walter Martens	Spencer Cordoni
Trevor Hryciuk	Lorne Hall
Dean Stretch	Donald Beingessner
Brian Hodgkinson	Wayne Linfitt
William Greig	Mark Gibson
Peter Merasty	Carman Flynn

I invite the member opposite to assist in reading the remainder of the names.

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

Nathaniel Teed: —

Armando Ibe	Justin Shipowich
Greg Budd	Mathew Lubiniecki
Joan Carriere	Matthew Brawn
Rory Ellis	Juan Cardama
Devin Matileg	Tori Payne-Werner
Erwin Heinek	George Braun

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I now ask that we observe a moment of silence to commemorate the Day of Mourning and to honour the lives that have been lost in workplaces throughout our province.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

Speaker Goudy: — Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — Request has been made for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining us in the legislature today is a group of folks from the organization Ability in Me from Saskatoon. We're pleased to have them here at the legislature today. As I mentioned a couple weeks ago, they're going to be having a reception for all MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] later this evening from 5 to 7, and we look forward to hopefully an informative and a fun presentation with your group today.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've had the ability to tour AIM [Ability in Me]. So has the Premier and the Minister of Education as well. Just an impressive organization serving children with Down syndrome and their families, not just in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, but in communities right across the province. Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased to support AIM in the work that they do with an investment of nearly \$200,000 this year to support the staffing services for both SLPs [speech-language pathologist] as well as OTs [occupational therapist] as well.

So joining us today from Ability in Me — if you could just give us a wave — we have Brittany Caffet, Melanie Norris, Joelle Norris, Meghan Badun, Emma Weighill, Abby Holubetz, and Eric Olason.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming

these fine folks to this their legislature. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet today to join in with the Minister of Health in welcoming the Ability in Me delegation that's here today. Thank you for all the work you're doing, and it's a pleasure to see you in the Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome a couple of more groups that have joined us. We've got a pretty full gallery here today. We have medical students from the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan that we had the pleasure of meeting with this morning. Joining us are Tauqeer Iftikhar, Jake Reaser, Alex Andres, Shubhan Syed, and Meet Patel. It was lovely to hear from you in terms of your advocacy for more long-term care spaces in the province, so thank you for the work that you are doing.

And also while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome a group that has joined us from Saskatoon from the Bridging Filipinos Advocacy Corp. So we have with us today in your gallery Roger Jurado, Bella Torres Josue, Nenita Armstrong, Kathryn Sampaga, Lian Pagala, Zian Tejano, Jackie Loewen-Banastas, Adelaida Lumanog, and Marshia Tingot.

I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming all of these groups, and I'll have more to say about this group in a member's statement later today. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm on my feet today again to join the member opposite in welcoming these medical students to this their legislature. I'd just like to thank them for their advocacy, Mr. Speaker.

Actually when I was home just this last week, I had an opportunity to meet with some of the resident doctors in my own community. We have an impressive group of medical students and residents and future physicians in this province, Mr. Speaker. So I would just ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Request leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First I'd like to welcome a couple of constituents of Regina Wascana Plains, Paul Gee and his wife, Joanne. With them today are members of Paul's family: his sister Elaine and sister Sylvia and her husband, Bernie. Paul and I grew up in the same neighbourhood in south Regina and we connected this past fall as I was out door knocking in his area.

I'll expand on the family a little further later in a member's statement, but don't want to give up the spoiler here. So please join me in welcoming Paul, Joanne, Elaine, Sylvia, and Bernie to their Legislative Assembly.

Also with us today in the east gallery are members of the Regina Riot women's football team. Here today are Head Coach Claire Doré, some of the staff, and a host of players including my daughter Taline up there as well.

The Riot compete in the Western Women's Canadian Football League. The league also includes teams like the Manitoba Fearless, Edmonton Arctic Pride, Calgary Rage, Lethbridge Steel, and the Saskatoon Valkyries, whose butt they look forward to kicking this season. The Riot start their season in Winnipeg this weekend, optimistically on their way to the league championship in late June. Please join me in wishing the Riot good luck in their upcoming season and welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Moosomin-Montmartre.

Kevin Weedmark: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Kevin Weedmark: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to welcome the members of the Gee family here today, Paul and Joanne, Sylvia and Bernie — who come from out my way, out from Kipling, where Sylvia was a valued teacher at the school for many years — and Elaine.

I grew up here in Regina, and the house I grew up in was about a block from Sam's convenience store. And the school I went to, McCannel School, was about a block from Sam's convenience store. And the sign on the front of that building said Parliament Centre Confectionery, but I don't think I ever heard anyone refer to it as anything other than Sam's. It was known as Sam's throughout the neighbourhood, and it was a real community institution. And I just can't imagine that neighbourhood in Regina without Sam's. It was a wonderful place.

And Sam Gee and his wife, Morly, they were such a part of the community. They raised seven children and they were very important to that area of Regina. And I just want to welcome the members of the Gee family here today. I know that the Gee family has been recognized in many ways. Sam won the Queen's Jubilee Medal at one point, and they're recognized on the map of

Regina. And I just want to welcome the family here to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — I request leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour for me to rise from my seat today and introduce some folks from northern Saskatchewan. And I'll ask that they stand and wave when I say their names. I'll go through their names and I'll explain why they're here.

Tracy Merasty, Sandy Bay; Yvonne Fourhorns; Leo Merasty; Myrtle Ray; Marcelline Charlette; Steven Charlette; Rachel Bear; Yvonne Dumas; J.R. Dumas; the grandkids, Logan Merasty, Marcus Sewap, and Elizra Roberts.

These folks were here today to hear their uncle, father, grandfather, brother read into record as one of the members that have passed working on the job site here in Saskatchewan. Peter Merasty was from all accounts an amazing man. He cared about his family, worked hard to provide for that family, worked at the Island Falls power station, and passed away on May 16th, 1963, and came from a family of seven.

It's an honour for me to be able to call Tracy a friend of mine, and I hope that today brings part of a closure for him and his family as they honour their family member. And I ask that all members join me in welcoming them to this their provincial legislature here today.

[13:45]

And just very briefly while I'm on my feet, I know that I would get a solid kick right after question period if I didn't recognize an old friend of mine from La Ronge, Mel Norris. I came to know Mel from the . . . She's here with the Ability in Me. She had done a ton of work not only for her daughter Avery but for the communities in northern Saskatchewan through NorthSask Special Needs. Just a ton of advocacy, a heart of gold. And I want to also ask the members to join with me in welcoming Mel to her provincial legislature. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you

to all members, a former member of the Legislative Assembly. He's sitting high up in your gallery. Eric Olauson, the member for Saskatoon University from the years 2016 to 2020. And previous to that he served his city, the city of Saskatoon, as a city councillor in ward 8. Part of his ward overlapped with my constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove.

Eric has been a good friend to members on both sides of the House and a very active member when he was here, certainly very much interested in budgeting and balanced budgets and team building, and he served as our caucus Chair as well. And he did an adequate job, or more-than-adequate job — “adequate” being one of his favourite lines so it's a bit of an inside joke — but definitely more than adequate. He's a good friend, a confidant, and a pretty good door knocker as well.

And he continues to serve his community in so many ways. Today he's here with the Ability in Me group as well. And I know members from Saskatoon that attend the Saskatoon Berries game will understand that he looks very similar to the mascot for the Saskatoon Berries, Barry, where he volunteers on several occasions.

So, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all members, please welcome back Eric Olauson to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to join in with the minister opposite in welcoming Eric Olauson back to his Legislative Assembly. Our time overlapped by a few years in this space so I did have the chance to get to know him a little bit.

I want to thank him for his service. None of us serves in this space alone, and it definitely takes a toll on our personal lives. So I want to thank him for his service both within the legislature and to city council and in his continued endeavours in serving the community.

So on behalf of the official opposition I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Eric back to his Assembly.

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

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, through you, I will be welcoming a group of Regina Huda School students from grade 8. They are sitting in your gallery, our future leaders, and I will say they are our future faces and I'm very proud of them. Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied with two incredible teachers, Ms. Garritty and Ms. Stinson. Thank you very much for bringing your class to their Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just let you know that Regina Coronation Park has this school and not only that it's including in my constituency, but I will say that I have a special connection with this school. Since 2009 till 2023 I was a driver educator providing this little, small school — I can't call it anymore little because they are growing bigger and bigger. And at one time the class was only grade 8. Now we can see grade 8A and grade 8B, so they are expanding. So thank you very much for that.

And I will say that my five daughters have graduated from Regina Huda School which I'm very proud, and two of my daughters are in medical school. I will say with that that we can give them a warm welcome for our future faces. I will request all members to join me and welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Megan Patterson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it is my pleasure to introduce Rhonda Smysniuk. I met Rhonda when I moved back to Saskatchewan and worked at SaskPower. Rhonda quickly became a good friend and mentor to me. She helped me transition from the private sector to the public sector, as she has much experience there.

I also just wanted to thank her for her guidance and her mentorship. She also wrote a reference letter for me to take my Executive M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration] at the U of R [University of Regina] here. So I want to thank her for that and all her support over the years. Can everyone in the Assembly join me in welcoming Rhonda Smysniuk to this, her Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to welcome, in the west gallery, Levi Nilson who is our constituency assistant. I can't see him right now but I'm pretty confident he's back there.

Levi Nilson has just been a pleasure to work with. He has more political experience than more than half of the members on this floor. He was originally elected as the president of the University of Calgary's student union and then served municipal governments as an assistant at the city of Calgary. As well, he also served in government for the provincial Alberta NDP [New Democratic Party] and also in opposition as a constituency assistant there. I can't say enough good things about Levi as well.

He wanted to wear his Oilers jersey in here tonight. I'm sure the Premier would be excited to chat with Levi. Levi's very knowledgeable about the NHL [National Hockey League] and in particular the Edmonton Oilers. I sort of have an anyone-but-Toronto mentality. He seems to have, for some reason, a distaste for the Winnipeg Jets. So the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove and myself might have some things to say about that. But with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd encourage everyone on both sides to welcome Levi Nilson.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I want to introduce four guests in your gallery seated in the second row, a family — a family of three generations — from Moose Jaw and also from my hometown of Caron as well.

I'll start with the most important one in the bunch. That would be of course Hudson Newsham, the youngest; and he's a grade 7 student, 12 years of age. And he tells me that he was an active

participant in the Mortlach ATV [all-terrain vehicle] rally that was held just recently, and I'll speak more about that just a little bit later.

With him is his mom, Lindsay Newsham — give us a wave — and Lindsay's parents, Nadine and Mark Thiele. Welcome to this, your Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to join the member from Saskatoon Fairview to welcome Bridging Filipino Advocacy corporation. I had a chance of attending a couple of events organized by them. They are doing a fantastic job to promote Filipino culture and Filipino heritage. Thank you for your advocacy. I ask all the members to join me to welcome to their legislature.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Remote and Rural Health.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I would also like to welcome the Bridging Filipino association to the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, these individuals and other individuals across the province have truly made our province so much more rich. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the work that you have been doing and the work that you will continue to do across our province. And please join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Joan Pratchler: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to welcome some child care providers from Saskatchewan here in Regina. They are part of the team at the Play & Discover Early Learning Centre. We have Nicole Wall, who's one of the educators there, and also Prateek Dhiman, who is one of the nutrition workers at this centre. Together that centre has been around for 40 years, and they have 50 spaces of excellent child care here in the province. Please join with me in welcoming them to their legislature.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could, just briefly I'd like to join with the member opposite, the MLA for Regina Rochdale, in welcoming the early childhood educators from Play & Discover education centre. I appreciate very much the work that you do helping to raise our youngest generation here in Saskatchewan. So on behalf of the provincial government, I would like to extend our welcome to you to this, your provincial Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Doug Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd also like to acknowledge Eric Olason.

He was my seatmate back in 2016 when we got started. We'd sit at the back, way back, way back over there, but anyway . . . And

we had a little running bet on what the comments were going to be at the first part of question period. I just want to make a note: you still owe me two bits — well 25 cents, I guess you want to call it — on that bet. You didn't pay up. But that's okay. We'll call it a wash. And welcome to your legislature there.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to welcome a dear friend of mine, Jeffery Klyne, who is seated in the east gallery.

Jeff is one of the most proud Saskatchewanians that I know. He is committed to never leaving the province for travel and wants to explore every single corner of this province. Jeff is a member of the Saskatoon Southeast executive. I would not be in the Legislative Assembly without his support. He canvassed with me almost daily on the campaign. He was a member and worked on the campaign. He is a dedicated caregiver to his brother, a small-business owner, and an educator. I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming him to his Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member Regina Rochdale.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition to discuss the federal-provincial child care agreement. The undersigned residents would like to bring to our attention the following: that child care operators, parents, and families have all voiced their concern; they know that affordable and accessible child care is critical for our families, the economy, jobs, and our future; licensed child care centres have contributed to our local economy by providing local jobs, opportunities for professional development, and by allowing parents to rejoin and join the workforce; and that without access to affordable and accessible child care, families will be forced to leave the workforce, which will have impacts on our economy and our communities.

I'll read the prayer. It is as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately renew the federal-provincial child care agreement to save jobs, help families, and boost our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from citizens from Regina. I do so present.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan for mandatory intimate partner violence education. We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following. Saskatchewan has the highest rate per capita of intimate partner violence, also known as domestic violence, in Canada. Workplace orientation would include all genders from all walks of life in all areas of the

province. Employers and employees need to know the signs of IPV [intimate partner violence] and where to call for help. Education is key to changing the rates of IPV.

And with that, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately mandate education on intimate partner violence be included in the orientation process for all new employees across all workplaces in the province.

[14:00]

The undersigned residents reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Matt Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be on my feet to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling on this province to fix the crisis in our classrooms. Those who signed the petition today would like us to know that over the last dozen years, Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces in the country that has seen a decline in per-student funding and during that same span, nationwide we've seen an increase in per-student funding by about 8 per cent.

Now we're talking about per-student funding and those who signed this petition know that that is a key metric — not per capita funding, Mr. Speaker, but per student. They'd like us to know that the Sask Party government's cuts to education mean the teachers, EAs [educational assistant], and support staff continue to be overworked and underpaid, while students don't get the supports that they need.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately provide adequate funding to public, Catholic, and francophone schools in Saskatchewan to fix the crisis in our classrooms.

The petition today is signed by residents of Regina. I do so present.

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

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to reverse the ban on third-party educators from publicly funded schools. Those who've signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that on August 22nd, 2023 the Saskatchewan government banned all third-party educators from publicly funded schools.

Those who were banned include organizations like the Regina Sexual Assault Centre, the Prince Albert Sexual Assault Centre, and the Battlefords & Area Sexual Assault Centre. The topics that these organizations teach include consent, healthy

relationships, and child sexual abuse prevention. Mr. Speaker, the decision to ban these educators will make Saskatchewan's rates of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and sexual abuse worse, not better.

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 Government of Saskatchewan to immediately reverse its decision to ban third-party educators in Saskatchewan schools and consult with experts in developing a comprehensive curriculum for all Saskatchewan students.

Those who have signed this petition come from Melfort and Gronlid. I do so present.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm on my feet to present a petition calling on this government to overhaul standards of eligibility to long-term care in Saskatchewan. The signatories of this petition wish to bring to our attention: that seniors applying for long-term care homes in Saskatchewan say eligibility criteria are subjective and unclear; wait times to be admitted can be months long; that families with seniors on care home wait-lists are forced often to engage private home care, and then when they do become eligible that is sometimes used as an excuse not to give them access to long-term care; and that home care in Saskatchewan costs up to \$75 an hour. That is far outside the means of most Saskatchewan families.

We had the distinct pleasure today of hearing from the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan advocating around much-needed reforms to LTC [long-term care]. Safe to say this is just one piece of that. I know they've met with us. They're going to meet with government. Their advocacy is always exceptional. I won't give any more spoilers, Mr. Speaker, but safe to say this is a critical and ongoing issue.

So with that I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to call on the Government of Saskatchewan to work directly with seniors and long-term care homes to improve standards of eligibility for people seeking admittance to long-term care.

The signatories of this petition reside in Saskatoon and North Battleford. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Support for Filipino Community in Wake of Tragedy

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We condemn the senseless attack during the Lapu-Lapu Day festival in Vancouver where a driver drove into a crowd, killing at least 11 people including young children and injuring many others. This act of

violence aimed at a community celebrating resilience and cultural pride is a grave affront to humanity. Our thoughts are with the victims, their families, and Filipino Canadian communities whose celebration was devastated by this tragedy.

The haunting scene and trauma experienced by witnesses will remain etched in our memories. Such violence has no place in society, and justice must serve for their lives affected. While authorities have ruled out terrorism due to suspected mental health history, this incident underscores the need for better public safety and mental health support.

To the Filipino community, your resilience will help you navigate this dark time. Our hearts go out to you, the victims, and to their families who bear the unimaginable weight of this loss. This tragedy serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of peace and the need for vigilance against violence.

I will ask all members to join me for a moment of silence in the memory of the precious lives that we lost in this event.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Thank you to the member opposite, and thank you to those from the Filipino community that have joined us here today, as we acknowledge this past weekend. Thousands gathered in Vancouver to celebrate the Filipino Lapu-Lapu festival, Mr. Speaker. There was children, parents, grandparents, people from the Filipino community, as well as those from many other backgrounds who were there to do what Canadians do, to celebrate what makes our country unique.

And while we celebrate being Canadian, it's important for everyone, I think, on this day, this week, to recognize the Filipino community in Canada and what they have brought to our country, and more specifically what they have brought to our province of Saskatchewan. They live, work, play, raise their families in communities alongside each of us. They contribute so very much to those communities. They so willingly share their customs and their culture, Mr. Speaker. They share their food, their music, their festivals, and their joy.

So it was with horror that we all witnessed the tragedy that happened this past Saturday, a senseless and deadly attack on an otherwise very peaceful celebration, with 11 killed, so many more injured. We cannot begin to truly understand the devastation that is being felt by their loved ones and by their community.

And while we try to make sense of what is a very senseless act, let us come together to support those who are suffering across this nation — the Filipino community of Canada and Saskatchewan. We grieve with you and we offer our condolences to all of those that are affected and impacted by this tragedy. And we pray that somehow your hearts might find peace in the time of such overwhelming loss.

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

Honouring Contributions of Filipino Community in Saskatchewan

Vicki Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the devastating tragedy at Vancouver's Lapu-Lapu festival, I rise to celebrate the launch of the Bridging Filipino Advocacy Corporation and to honour the incredible contributions of Saskatchewan's Filipino community.

This organization is more than an advocacy group. It's a movement rooted in unity, empowerment, and cultural pride. The values that the Filipino community brings to our province — resilience, compassion, and the spirit of bayanihan or mutual support — have deeply enriched Saskatchewan. These values reflect the very best of who we are and what we strive to be.

The Filipino community reminds us of the importance of family, a value that we in the Saskatchewan NDP deeply respect. That's why we're committed to reinstating the family class of the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. Reuniting families strengthens our communities and helps us build a more compassionate and connected Saskatchewan.

Whether through supporting newcomers, organizing cultural events, or offering a helping hand to those in need, BFAC [Bridging Filipino Advocacy Corp.] continues to make Saskatoon a more inclusive and welcoming city. And for that we are all grateful. And to the current board members who've joined us here today — Roger Jurado, Bella Torres Josue, Nenita Armstrong, Kathyryn Sampaga, Lian Pagala and Zian Tezano, Jackie Loewen-Banastas, Adelaida Lumanog, and Marshia Tingot — maraming salamat, thank you very much.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Mortlach Hosts Annual All-Terrain Vehicle Derby

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 12th the Mortlach Recreation Board hosted their fourth annual all-terrain vehicle derby. Many families from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta travelled to Mortlach to attend the derby, and this year there were 270 machines that entered and about 550 total participants.

The rally involves everyone starting at the Mortlach rink and then heading south to three different farmyards. The total route is just under 60 kilometres and offers coulees and mud pits to play in. And yes, Hudson did play in some of those mud pits.

The cost of the event is \$20 per machine, including a hot dog lunch that was donated by Newsham Electric and cooked by the Thieles who are with us today as well. This year the derby brought in just under \$10,000. All the money goes to the Mortlach Rec Board and they plan to continue to renovate the rink. In the future they are hoping to upgrade the change rooms, paint the interior, and replace flooring upstairs.

Money raised from past derbies was put towards a beautiful kitchen renovation that they were able to debut for this year's event. The Mortlach-Parkbeg First Responders were the first to use the new kitchen when they hosted their own fundraiser in conjunction with the derby and offered breakfast and supper at

the event.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Mortlach Rec Board on another successful ATV derby and fundraiser. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Gee Crescent Named to Honour Confectionery Owners

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency of Regina Wascana Plains there is a small crescent that connects Green Apple Drive at either end. It is called Gee Crescent. Paul Gee and wife, Joanne, are constituents in Regina Wascana Plains, and in 2016 Gee Crescent was named in honour of Paul's parents, Sam and Morly Gee.

Sam Gee came to Canada in 1952. He and his wife, Morly, were married 55 years and were active members of the Chinese community in Regina throughout their life. From 1967 to 1997, Sam and Morly Gee owned and operated Parliament Centre Confectionery here in the city at the corner of Parliament and Montague.

This was my neighbourhood growing up, and everyone in Parliament Place and Albert Park just called it Sam's. The store was open late at night 365 days a year, including Christmas. Sam's was the hub of the community. That's where our parents got their groceries and where we went for our snacks and pop. The store was a total family effort with Sam, Morly, or one of their seven children operating the till.

Sam and Morly have since passed, but the street named in their honour will be a part of Regina and Wascana Plains long into the future. It's my distinct honour to have Gee Crescent in Regina Wascana Plains and my pleasure to welcome members of the Gee family here today.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Dakota-Arm River.

Saskatchewan Hockey Teams Celebrate Championships

Barret Kropf: — What a fantastic weekend of hockey for Saskatchewan teams, Mr. Speaker. While Saskatchewan provides the world with food, fuel, and fertilizer, we also provide the world with incredible hockey players too. On Sunday we saw the Saskatoon Stars, U18 [under 18] AAA female provincial champions, on the national podium; and the Regina Pat Canadians, the U18 AAA male provincial champions, on the national podium as well.

The Saskatoon Stars, coached by Alana Serhan, were appearing in their fifth Esso Cup national championship and found their way into the championship final against Edmonton. The Stars came home as the silver medal winners and we congratulate them on an incredible season by representing Saskatchewan so well on the national stage.

Also on Sunday the Regina Pat Canadians were hunting for their fifth national championship at the Telus Cup. They were pitted against the Chevaliers de Lévis from Quebec. The game extended into overtime, and local Regina product and tournament MVP

[most valuable player] Maddox Schultz won the national championship for the Pat Cs with a patented laser shot to send the squad onto the ice to celebrate their fifth national championship. Congratulations to Coach Ryan Hodgins and your staff for another successful season with the Pat Cs.

And to cap off Sunday, Mr. Speaker, your Melfort Mustangs, for the second year in a row, won the SJHL [Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League] championship by defeating the Weyburn Red Wings. Congratulations to coach Trevor Blevins and the Mustangs on a great season.

And all the teams, we congratulate you.

[14:15]

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

High School Wrestlers from the Northeast Complete Successful Season

Terri Bromm: — Mr. Speaker, March was a big month for the Carrot River wrestling team and coaches Kevin Duchscherer and Barbie Harder.

On March 1st, Carrot River hosted the SHSAA [Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association] regional championships, which saw 178 wrestlers from 32 schools and 29 different weight classes on display. I hear it was a well-attended and exciting day for wrestlers and spectators alike.

Five students from the Carrot River Wildcat team moved on to provincials at the University of Regina the following weekend for Carrot River's seventh season of competition. Jessika Harder, Brady Thesen, Paola Beriguete, Landon Larson, and Ava Edwards competed at provincials, where the boys' team finished fourth and the girls' team finished second in the 3A division.

Two of these Wildcats walked away with provincial medals. Paola and Jessika each won silver in their weight class. Way to go, Wildcats. A shout-out to Jessika and Ava, who then moved on to compete in the Sask wrestling club provincial championships for the P.A. [Prince Albert] Wrestling Club, each winning gold in their classes.

L.P. Miller School was represented by coach Sheldon Neufeld and wrestlers Clayton Berglund and McKenna Smits at regionals. McKenna moved on from regionals to compete in provincials, placing third in her weight class. Congratulations, Bears.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these coaches and wrestlers on a successful season.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Health Care Staffing and Access to Health Care

Vicki Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is failing to deliver health care when and where people need it. Just look at the

Premier's own constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. We know that three hospitals and health centres in his riding — the Parkland Integrated Health Centre, Rosthern Hospital, and Shellbrook hospital — faced a combined 43 days of health care blackouts between August 2019 and May 2024. And we've heard that Parkland Health Centre faced health care blackouts this weekend due to short-staffing.

What does the Premier have to say to his constituents who can't get health care in his own backyard?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the constituents of Rosthern-Shellbrook as well as the other 60 constituencies all around the province, they can be assured that because of this government's most ambitious in the nation health human resources action plan, Mr. Speaker, we are working to address staffing challenges that we have in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

This isn't unique to Saskatchewan, but again with an ambitious plan to hire more, to train more, to incentivize, and to retain more, Mr. Speaker, we are going to ensure that Saskatchewan residents have access to health care closer to home. Thank you.

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

Vicki Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, it's the second in the community this month. That is the track record of this government. Mr. Speaker, they've broken our health care system, and they can't be trusted to fix it.

It's true in the Premier's riding and it's also true in the North. The La Loche emergency room was closed last week because there weren't enough staff. What does the Premier have to say to people in the North who have to drive hours and hours for basic health care that should be available closer to home?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we did have a one-day disruption at the La Loche emergency room, Mr. Speaker. That disruption has been rectified.

As I said though, Mr. Speaker, in my previous answer, thanks to the most ambitious health human resources action plan in the country, we are taking steps to address shortages. 420 internationally trained health care workers, Mr. Speaker, are on the ground in the province and working in communities all over — rural communities, northern communities, as well as our two major cities, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about the rural and remote recruitment incentive, Mr. Speaker, 424 full-time positions filled across the province, Mr. Speaker, again ensuring that Saskatchewan residents can access care close to home. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Leroy Laliberte: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the Minister of

Health is not understanding what's going on in the North. Mr. Speaker, last week the emergency room in La Loche was closed yet again because there weren't enough staff. It doesn't matter if it's a half a day or a day or a few hours. When are people going to be able to know when they're going to have an emergency? It needs to be open, Mr. Speaker.

This happens every week in the North. My constituents can't get the health care when they need it while this government pats itself on the back, failing to recruit health care workers and cutting the health care budget, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful.

Can someone over there tell me why they were celebrating when you can't even get basic access to health care in the North?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll correct something right off the top from that member's question. The health care budget hasn't been cut, Mr. Speaker. An additional \$485 million in this year's health care budget, Mr. Speaker. Again, targeted investments to show, Mr. Speaker, to get access to primary care, to improve access to surgeries.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the rural and remote recruitment incentive is showing success, even in the community of La Loche, Mr. Speaker, by filling full-time positions. There's more work to do, but thank goodness we've got a government that's willing to do the work.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Leroy Laliberte: — Here's your page 27; it says \$17 million health cut.

Mr. Speaker, for many, health care means the difference between life and death. This is what you're not understanding, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken to people forced to travel 15 hours for dialysis — one way, Mr. Speaker — sometimes up to three times a week. That's 15 hours one way, and sometimes people need the treatment three times in a single week.

I have the pain on anguished people's faces that I see every day with these horrific challenges, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier think that this is acceptable for dialysis patients to travel 15 hours for the care that they need to be able to stay alive?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, shortages and disruptions are not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly why we're making the type of investments that I've talked about in my previous answers, Mr. Speaker. As I said, \$485 million added to this year's health care budget, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition in their election platform, Mr. Speaker, they only committed to another \$150 million in health care spending. That would be a significant challenge to address staffing challenges in rural and remote northern communities, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to dialysis, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why we've made investments in North Battleford and Meadow Lake to serve

the northwest corner of the province and improve dialysis services for those in that part of the province.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Leroy Laliberte: — Mr. Speaker, North Battleford is not the North. It has "North" in it, Mr. Speaker.

The health care crisis in the North isn't new. This has been going on for 18 years under the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. But I tell you, it's getting worse, not better. The people of the North are proud of where they live and they should be. They don't want to move, and they shouldn't have to.

The Sask Party says that they care, but many people that I talk to haven't even met a Sask Party MLA, Mr. Speaker. How is this government going to stand in the House and say that they care when they constantly neglect the people of the North with the critical health care that they need, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that we're talking about that member opposite's home community. All of our home communities are important to us and near and dear to our hearts, Mr. Speaker. But I can say this government, myself, myself personally, have spent significant time up in the North — especially the Northwest — understanding the communities, listening to their concerns, Mr. Speaker.

Just last week, Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting with a group from the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, Mr. Speaker. We know there's challenges in the North, as there are . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — The member from Regina Mount Royal has been fairly . . . We need to hear answers when questions are given. So I'm going to ask if everyone would certainly listen.

Please, Minister of Health, would you continue?

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I've spent time in the North in Ile-a-la-Crosse and La Loche, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to returning to those communities this summer, Mr. Speaker, when session rises, and again hearing directly face to face from community members what's important to them when it comes to health care and in figuring out solutions. How we can work together to deliver that for the residents. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a fairly self-congratulatory tone that that Minister of Health is taking when he can't guarantee health care to people when and where they need it. And I've seen it with my own eyes, Mr. Speaker. He cannot continue to pretend that everything is fine in health care.

I've been across this province talking to people about health care in their home communities. The message is clear. Whether it's

the North, the South, or the Premier's own backyard, people can't trust that the services they need will be there when they need them. What is that minister doing to get health care blackouts in this province under control?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Well, Mr. Speaker, at the risk of repeating myself, I'll point back to the health human resources action plan. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, all of this comes down to staffing. And that's why this government has taken an aggressive approach to health human resources, Mr. Speaker.

424 full-time positions filled through the rural and remote recruitment incentive, Mr. Speaker: 90 in North Battleford, 90 full-time positions filled, Mr. Speaker; 60 in Prince Albert; nine in Shellbrook. Not to mention communities all across the province — north, south, rural, and remote, Mr. Speaker. This is exactly why this government is remaining focused on training more and hiring more.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's all about the patients and ensuring they have better access close to home. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara Conway: — Mr. Speaker, according to him it's all a good news story, except we have data on health care blackouts in this province between August 2019 and May 2024. That's just under five years, Mr. Speaker. And in those five years emergency and acute care services have been down 3,966 days. That's more than two incidents per day every day for five straight years.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister consider it's acceptable that on any given day two communities in this province face a health care blackout?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, all 61 MLAs in this House know there's challenges. They understand that there's challenges, Mr. Speaker. What I want to stay focused on is ideas. Ideas and solutions to address those challenges and serve the people of our community better, Mr. Speaker. I've already talked about the incentives that are in place, the generous financial incentives that are in place in communities all across the province, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to bring attention though to the virtual physician program, Mr. Speaker, again which ensures that emergency rooms in rural and remote parts of the province can continue on.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot about challenges. I'd love to hear some ideas from the other side. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara Conway: — Mr. Speaker, over those five years there have been over 500 days of blackouts for obstetric services in Saskatchewan. And news flash to the Minister of Health, ideas will not deliver a baby safely. That's a hundred days per year.

And I've been asking people on my travels if I were in your hometown, could I plan to safely deliver my baby here? And too often the answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, frankly families, women deserve better than to live with that anxiety. What does the minister have to say to women of this province, women like Kendal Carlberg who worry they may have to give birth at the side of the road because they can't have a baby in their home community?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I would say the same thing to Ms. Carlberg that I've said to other women in this province. I am committed, this government is committed, Mr. Speaker, to addressing challenges out there and to ensure that facilities are staffed up.

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — I'm going to ask again that the members listen to the answers. And it's hard to hear. The gallery is trying to listen. It seems like those who ask the questions need to listen as well.

And, Minister.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I myself had a child born in a regional hospital in this province. We have some incredible health care workers in smaller cities and smaller communities right across the province that are prepared to deliver high-quality care to the residents of this province, Mr. Speaker. That's something that we can be absolutely proud of, Mr. Speaker. What this government is working on is ensuring that more staff are in those facilities to help the residents of this province. Thank you.

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

Overdose Deaths and Treatment for Addictions

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Fire Department responded to more than 900 calls about drug overdoses this year, and those are just the incidents we know about. We know that almost as many people have died in Saskatoon from drugs this year than did during all of 2024. The Sask Party government has done very little, if anything, and this crisis gets worse.

[14:30]

These are deaths that could have been prevented. What does the minister say to the families who are grieving the deaths of their loved ones?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, every loss of life due to an overdose is a tragedy, and I extend my condolences to all of those that have felt the impact of overdose, drug toxicity,

and addictions.

We know that no illicit drugs are safe to use. We have been working very closely, the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency has been working very closely with the city of Saskatoon as well as the Saskatoon Fire Department to work on the issues that are happening there at this current point in time.

But, Mr. Speaker, what we're focused on is recovery, and that's why this government is committed to adding 500 additional beds to the system. Mr. Speaker, we're already at 264 of that 500, and we are anxious to get the other ones up and running. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, platitude after platitude does not bring comfort to those that lost a loved one from a drug overdose. Mr. Speaker, the folks I've been talking to on the front line of this drug crisis aren't seeing additional supports from the Sask Party. We need more police, no doubt, and we also need more support for these agencies who literally work around the clock to save lives. The government has announced an emergency response team, but still it isn't operational. When will it be fully operational and running?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, we will continue to work with the city of Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Fire Department on services to help deal with these issues as they arise, Mr. Speaker. We continue to add different types of services. For example, we work in partnership with the Saskatoon Fire Department on something called overdose outreach teams, and they conduct outreach to people who are at risk of overdose with the goal of trying to help get them support.

Mr. Speaker, I would not call that platitudes; I would call that action. We have these people out there working collaboratively with the fire department trying to help individuals who find themselves in need, Mr. Speaker. In fact, to date they have supported more than 850 individuals, connecting them with the appropriate resources, including mental health and addiction services.

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

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, the folks want to hear the answer to that question, and that wasn't given. Furthermore the fire department, they're doing an exceptional job. You know what, if they're . . . Give them more support to continue doing the great work they're doing.

The drug crisis in Saskatoon is horrific, Mr. Speaker, but it's not just in Saskatoon. We see preventable overdose deaths right across the province. My colleagues from Athabasca and Cumberland have attended too many funerals in recent weeks for people who died as a result of drug overdose or because there were no proper mental health supports in the North. I, too, have

attended many heartbreaking funerals from drug overdose. These victims are often young. They're our future, and they're dying, Mr. Speaker. How many more funerals will be held before this government takes this drug crisis seriously and takes the necessary action to save lives?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I talked about the additional beds and spaces that we're opening throughout the province. We already are well over half on the goal that we've actually set, and we will continue to go down that path, Mr. Speaker. We will work collaboratively with all communities across this province opening those beds. We look at where are beds in the province, where are spaces that we need, who can we work with. Is it a First Nation organization? Is it a organization that's already set up, Mr. Speaker?

We will continue on with that work, but what we won't do, Mr. Speaker, is we will not close down services that are actually happening out there. In my community of Estevan, when the members opposite had the opportunity to serve this province as leaders, they shut down every single bed in my community.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

Tuition Costs and Funding for Post-Secondary Education

Tajinder Grewal: — Mr. Speaker, students at the University of Saskatchewan have been slapped with a 3.8 per cent tuition fee hike. This is a direct result from the cuts in this budget. Students are already in a difficult state of life: cost of living is high, rent is skyrocketing. Students and front-line workers are the ones who pay the price. Students can't afford these tuition hikes.

Mr. Speaker, how does that minister justify cutting our universities, forcing them to raise tuition in a cost-of-living crisis?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member and congratulations on asking your first question in Advanced Education. The critic has asked some good questions in estimates as well.

Certainly I love to talk about the University of Saskatchewan, a wonderful institution that is amongst the best funded across the country. Whether it's our universities or Sask Poly, they are very, very well funded. And we had the opportunity, after years and years of these institutions asking for multi-year funding, we were able to sign a multi-year agreement that lasted four years. And in this last budget we extended that for another year.

With that, part of the agreement is a cap of 4 per cent on tuition fees, a reasonable amount. And we are able to do that, and we look forward to extending that agreement or looking to a new agreement in the very near future. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

University-Sutherland.

Tajinder Grewal: — Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan have a higher financial anxiety than anywhere else in the country. The tuition increase is now added to that.

New figures released earlier this month show average rent in the province has increased by almost 34 per cent during the last five years. This budget doesn't keep up with the cost pressures our campuses across the province are facing. Our students should be focused on the studies, not how they will pay for it.

Does the minister take any responsibility for these tuition hikes, hikes that are a direct result of this government's record of cuts?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much for the question. And we are very proud to say the Ministry of Advanced Education is investing \$718.2 million in operating and capital grants for post-secondary institutions in the province — something that they are very appreciative for, something that they knew was coming because of the multi-year agreements that were in place that members opposite didn't have an opportunity to do when they were in government.

And when it comes to student supports — and we had a great discussion about this in estimates as well — in '25-26 we will provide \$113.4 million, an increase of 72.9 per cent from 2007, in student supports through tax credits, scholarships, and grants. And I'd love to talk about more.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

Tajinder Grewal: — Mr. Speaker, 6 million cut to the post-secondary education this year, and the minister should check his own budget.

These cuts are hurting our universities. They're also hurting Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Saskatchewan Polytechnic has said about 90 per cent of its graduates choose to work in Saskatchewan after completing school. Despite this, the Sask Party government has left Sask Poly to fend for itself. Seventy-eight front-line staff will be laid off. Faculty have long called for backup funding from the province to help offset the reliance on recruiting students from abroad.

What's that minister's plan to meaningfully fund these post-secondary institutions to prevent cuts, layoffs, and tuition hikes?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much for the question. And Sask Poly reviews its staffing complement each and every year at this time, and I understand that 27 layoff notices were issued by Sask Poly as part of their annual review. Now make no mistake, nobody likes to hear about layoff notices, but they do happen from time to time. This is a routine process, and it's not related to the provincial budget process or funding. As minister, I'm confident the institution will remain focused on

students and their mission and inspire success in every learning journey.

Now I want to be factual and not get too political on the answer to this question. But, Mr. Speaker, I have to make this fact known. The NDP didn't even mention . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The NDP opposition, I'm sorry. Yes, the NDP opposition did not even mention advanced education or post-secondary education in their most recent election platform. That is their record, Mr. Speaker.

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

Investigation of Saskatchewan Marshals Service Employee

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this spring one of the new members of the Saskatchewan marshals service was put on paid leave while the public complaints commission investigates an allegation of misconduct.

Saskatchewan people expect law enforcement officers to follow the law, and they expect transparency and accountability. To the Minister of Justice, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety: what is the marshal accused of doing?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As she well knows, these matters are investigated by the Public Complaints Commission, as all complaints against any police officer are investigated. That's an independent-led body, Mr. Speaker, at arm's length from government. It would certainly be inappropriate to be speculating or commenting on an ongoing investigation, and I won't do that on the floor of this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Nicole Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's a very simple question. It's very straightforward. The people of Saskatchewan deserve transparency, so I'm going to ask it again. What is this marshal accused of doing?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Policing and Corrections.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And once again, the investigation is handled by the Public Complaints Commission. It's not handled by government or the ministry. So, Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for the minister to comment on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Community Rink Affordability Program Delivers for Saskatchewan Communities

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week I was pleased to join the member for Prince Albert Carlton and representatives of the Sask Parks and Recreation Association at the Art Hauser Centre in Prince Albert to highlight how the community rink affordability program is delivering for the people of Saskatchewan communities.

The program recently wrapped up another successful year with 575 indoor ice surfaces receiving funding. My community of Prince Albert received a total of \$22,500 for nine indoor ice surfaces throughout the city, including the Art Hauser Centre, with many more communities benefiting across Saskatchewan. Numerous other communities, non-profits, schools, rink boards, and First Nations have received funding under this program to help with facility operational costs.

I want to thank Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association for all their hard work and dedication to administering this program on behalf of our government. Our government committed to doubling the community rink affordability grant program from \$2,500 to \$5,000 per indoor ice surface, and we are delivering on that commitment with \$3.2 million in funding in this budget.

I look forward to seeing communities across Saskatchewan continue to benefit with applications open for the enhanced program in January of 2026. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for providing a copy of the remarks in advance. In response to the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, I would first echo the importance in offering its . . .

Speaker Goudy: — You're not the member from Saskatoon Silverspring, and that's on me. So I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge. You may start right over. Thank you.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for providing a copy of the remarks in advance. In response to the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, I would first echo the importance in offering assistance and provincial funding for indoor ice surfaces in our province.

[14:45]

Saskatchewan has the highest per capita representation in the NHL amongst North American provinces and states. We also have five of our own female athletes currently representing us in the PWHL [Professional Women's Hockey League]. The greatest hockey player to come out of our province — Mr. Hockey, Gordie Howe — grew up using skates that were lent to him when he was six years old, and he didn't get a stick until he was nine. He exclusively learned his craft on the outdoor rink, utilizing it regardless of temperatures frequently dipping to minus 40. I bring this up in response to the minister's statement because many future Gordie Howes, many future Hayley Wickenheisers, could benefit from having additional

opportunities to use outdoor facilities.

Recently Saskatoon Stonebridge spent upwards of \$100,000 to install an outdoor rink in a neighbourhood of over 12,000 people. A small percentage of families have the means to participate in learning to skate or picking up a game of shinny on indoor surfaces, but outdoor surfaces should be considered for assistance as well in maintaining the rinks, as well as special funding for underserved communities and neighbourhoods seeking assistance to build more outdoor facilities.

Outdoor rinks are a fraction of the cost of indoor facilities and offer extensive opportunities for a wide range of economic and cultural backgrounds to get involved with in skating and hockey.

So with that I'll thank the minister for her statement. This is a great program, but there's more that needs to be done to get people in Saskatchewan playing hockey and skating for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

New Officers Hired to Support Front-Line Policing

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents expect and deserve to feel safe in their communities, and that means having enough police officers on the ground where they are needed most.

Last week our government announced 21 new police officer positions have been filled over the past year as part of the province's \$11.9 million safer communities and neighbourhoods commitment to hiring 100 new police officers across the province. This funding adds more boots on the ground to deliver on our government's priority to make communities safer across Saskatchewan.

This marks the first step towards fulfilling Saskatchewan's commitment to hire approximately 100 new police officers. We have also committed to funding Saskatchewan's full annex of new RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] positions, which is nearly 250 more officers, Mr. Speaker. We will also be funding 70 new officers through the Saskatchewan marshals service.

This year's budget provides \$2.7 million to hire 14 new SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods] personnel to reduce crime by targeting nuisance properties. And we are providing over \$660,000 for six weigh scale operators to conduct commercial vehicle inspections and prevent the transportation of illicit substances coming through our province.

Our government understands the importance of supporting municipal police services through expanding their front-line capacity to prevent and respond to criminal activity in our communities. We believe that keeping Saskatchewan people safe means more officers, greater police presence in our communities, and providing law enforcement with the tools they need so everyone in Saskatchewan feels safe in their communities and their neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, these 21 new officers are just one of many steps our government is taking to enhance law enforcement's presence in the province and make communities safer for everyone. Thank

you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the minister for providing an advance copy of his ministerial statement today.

As we've said before, we support the hiring of these new officers. I believe that this is a part of the announcement that was made prior to the election in 2024, Mr. Speaker. I know stakeholders were very pleased to hear that announcement, and they were hopeful that that commitment would be carried on into this budget cycle. And we're quite happy to see that that commitment has been carried on, Mr. Speaker.

As you well know, we've expressed some concerns about the creation of the marshals service. Part of those concerns is just ensuring that the government is not competing with other municipal and RCMP police forces for the limited amount of individuals who are doing this incredibly important work, Mr. Speaker, so ensuring that when we talk about more officers it means actual more officers for this province and not at the depletion of other forces within Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We also call on the minister and the government to ensure that the police college is adequately supported to be able to address the needs of all Saskatchewan forces to ensure that we can get boots on the ground as quickly as possible, Mr. Speaker. It's important also that we have a government that's tough on crime but also tough on the causes of crime.

And with that I point to some very successful policing initiatives like the PACT [police and crisis team] team that we haven't heard much about lately but I do know is very beloved within policing and has seen a lot of positive benefits for those detachments and those units that are able to utilize that service, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 4

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Jim Reiter that **Bill No. 4 — *The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2024*** be now read a second time.]

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

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be on my feet here today to enter into adjourned debate on Bill No. 4, *The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2024* as our official opposition shadow minister for Labour, Mr. Speaker. This is an important piece of legislation before our House, Mr. Speaker. I've been speaking with stakeholders. They're

welcoming these changes that we're seeing. And I'll do a bit of a summary about those changes, Mr. Speaker.

What we have before us is a bill that's looking to extend compensation coverage to wildland firefighters, is the big piece of this legislation. So we know that last year we extended cancer coverages for firefighters in Saskatchewan to a list that the firefighters' unions were asking for. They wanted these cancers covered because we're starting to see more and more effects of the work that firefighters do, the health effects on those folks and those workers.

And so what we're seeing here today is a continued work extending that coverage now to wildland firefighters, an important group of folks who are fighting fires on the wild frontiers of our province. And we're seeing these fires happen more and more and more in Saskatchewan, so it's important that we are ensuring that those folks who are doing that important work, often up in the North and across our province, are covered.

We see also extensions of compensation coverage around non-residents of Saskatchewan who are working for Saskatchewan companies outside of Saskatchewan. And so those folks, we're seeing coverage, that if you're working and you're injured on the job but you're working outside the province, your company's in Saskatchewan, you're going to be covered for worker's compensation.

Mr. Speaker, a couple other areas we're seeing. Is compensation going to be withheld for a worker in prison outside of Saskatchewan? So if you're in prison outside of Saskatchewan, you were on workers' comp, we see that the Workers' Compensation Board can now withhold those payments while they are remanded.

We also see changes to board members whose terms have expired. They can continue to see cases where seeing appeal decisions must be published in a format keeping with regulations. So, Mr. Speaker, what we see here today is some really important housekeeping work done to *The Workers' Compensation Act*.

You know, Mr. Speaker, on this we joined with the government last year in unanimous support of changes to coverages for firefighters. We joined with this government to show our support for those folks. We are fully supportive of expanding this current coverage. As I mentioned, wildfires are going to continue to be a common and more dangerous situation that folks are going to be facing, and so the folks that are on those front lines protecting our communities, they're heroes, Mr. Speaker, and they deserve to be looked after.

You know, every single person in this province deserves to go to work and come home safely, Mr. Speaker. On Day of Mourning this is so pertinent as we recently read the names of folks who did go to work and their lives were lost to workplace fatalities. Mr. Speaker, you know, we join with the government in continuing to work towards zero fatalities in the workplace, and this official opposition will always be supportive of efforts to make that happen.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when the worst happens and loved ones are killed, they deserve to be taken care of. When the worst happens and firefighters are in harm's way, they deserve to be

taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, this last Friday I had a really fantastic opportunity to meet with the local firefighters, Local 80 in Saskatoon, with my colleagues from Saskatoon Centre and Saskatoon Westview and to really just hear from those folks, you know. We had a conversation about houselessness. We had a conversation about mental health and addictions, how firefighters are now on the front lines of that mental health crisis, Mr. Speaker.

But we also talked a little bit afterward about the Bill 21 that's on the floor of this Assembly and just about how firefighters are really concerned about any time that firefighters have to throw on their equipment and be involved in training is essentially an exposure, you know, due to the chemicals that are applied to the safety equipment that these folks wear.

Every single time they put that on, it's a health risk, Mr. Speaker. It's taking years or days off their life, and so there is a lot of concern from those folks. So I know we're talking about Bill 4, but I really do urge the government to ensure that they're engaging with stakeholders on Bill 21.

You know, we heard very clearly that there are safer ways to train, and there are training facilities that are available for volunteer firefighters, for wildland firefighters, that they are able to use those facilities here in Saskatoon. And so really the takeaway there was, please engage with stakeholders on the bill, ensure that we're thinking of those firefighters that are on the front lines, and ensuring that all the training opportunities that firefighters are given are the safest possible training situations, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, I appreciate the work that's gone into this bill and I appreciate the work that our Workers' Compensation Board does. I could probably be on my feet extolling the virtues of the work that they do. But at this time, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to engage with stakeholders and will bring more questions to committee.

And so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see this bill move to its next stage.

Speaker Goudy: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 4, *The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2024* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Remote and Rural Health.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Bill No. 5

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 5 — *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2024*** be now read a second time.]

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

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to be on my feet again in adjourned debates.

I was just reminded by my colleague behind me that I said that we were in Saskatoon in my previous adjourned debate. So I would like to withdraw and apologize and recognize that we are in Regina, Mr. Speaker. After an Easter break back home in Saskatoon, I just didn't even remember where I was for a moment, Mr. Speaker. I drove up this morning, I'll be driving back this afternoon, and I'll be driving up again tomorrow morning. So at this point maybe we'll just consider both cities to be the same at the moment. We'll just . . . My colleague here made a good joke, but I maybe won't repeat that one on the record, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll get down to adjourned debates, Mr. Speaker — finally, Mr. Speaker. So it's a real honour to be on my feet. I warned my colleagues that I did have a song in my heart, so if they need to go to the washroom, now is the time. I'm going to be putting my remarks on the record here for Bill 5, Mr. Speaker. And I will bring down the hilarity, Mr. Speaker, because Bill 5 is an important piece of legislation that we're seeing.

It's *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, and I'm really pleased to be on my feet here today as the opposition shadow minister for Labour. I want to quickly thank the Minister of Labour for his remarks at second reading and thank my colleagues for the remarks that they've put on the record in the debate of this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that reviews and amendments of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* fall around a five-year pattern. It starts the process of seeking feedback for labour stakeholders and employers and workers in the province. In this case, the government was focused on part II of the Act that deals with employment standards and approached stakeholders on the following, Mr. Speaker. We saw the application of employment standard provisions; exemption of standards; rules around youth employment; definition of an employee and an employer; hours of work; work schedules; rest periods; meal breaks; right to disconnect; wages; employment; leaves such as maternity, adoption, parental leaves, family care leaves, intimate personal violence leaves, public health emergency leaves; rules around layoffs, terminations; and the authorities of employment standard officers in our province.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss to say that there a few things on that list that are missing, that weren't put forward to stakeholders, that I think we should have discussed. That would be, we see that there was no request for feedback or discussion on paid sick days being put forward to stakeholders in this process, Mr. Speaker.

We see little language around minimum wage in Saskatchewan — is it appropriate? is it enough? — and we see no consultation around advancing reconciliation in our workplaces and communities by recognizing National Truth and Reconciliation Day as a stat holiday in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Those three items were missing from that feedback-gathering process, Mr. Speaker. They were in submissions. You know, we did see stakeholders put those submissions forward, which I really appreciated seeing and why I'm bringing them up here today. But these are very important conversations that are warranted for our province.

I know that for the past several months I've been engaging with labour stakeholders. These issues were very much highlighted. And while we discuss what's missing, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that while the request for feedback casts a large net on stakeholders, it will be important through analysis of this bill to determine just who the government is taking advice on, who is helping shape labour policy in our province. And I hope to get a little bit more of that information. I've already started that process in our estimates process, and tomorrow this bill will be before committee, and I look forward to continuing to do that work, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the personal is political, and nowhere is it more personal than the relationship that each and every one of us has with our work, Mr. Speaker, with our workplace. A lot of times we spend more hours at work than we do with our family members. Every single day we wake up, we walk out the door, and we work to earn a living.

The political affects our lives, Mr. Speaker. The decisions in this Chamber affect our lives. They determine how fair an employee can treat you. They determine how low an employee can pay you. They determine if you can take sick leave and get paid or not. Decisions in this Chamber matter, and it's so important that we get labour regulations and legislation right.

And so that said, Mr. Speaker, it's important to review the changes that we have before us with Bill 5. On December 4, 2024, the Saskatchewan government introduced Bill 5, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act*. In the accompanying announcement, the government stated that amendments are intended to reduce administrative burdens for employers and provide support to employees. The government tag line for these amendments, and the goal, was ensuring fair and balanced employment laws. We shall analyze this, Mr. Speaker, as we review those changes.

Those changes include regulating of tips and gratuities — a welcome, welcome addition, Mr. Speaker. Limiting the use of sick notes, Mr. Speaker. You know, these are important and welcome changes. We know that so many people in Saskatchewan right now are without a family doctor. We're forcing people, when they are sick, to go into walk-in clinics or to see their family doctor to get a piece of paper — usually at the cost of the worker — to satisfy a human resources component in a workplace, Mr. Speaker.

And we learned through the pandemic that when you're sick, you're supposed to just stay home. Employers should find better ways of building relationships with their workers, Mr. Speaker,

and build that trust so that when employees call in sick, they are allotted the time that they need.

Then the other amendment we're really welcome to see is the extensions to various employment leaves, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to just look at specifically the long-term sick leave updates, Mr. Speaker. Long-term sick leave changes are really important and we welcome the changes that we're seeing, from 12 weeks job protection to 27 weeks, Mr. Speaker. So these changes now, they match the federal government's EI [employment insurance] sickness benefit, Mr. Speaker. We're now in line with that.

And from what I've been hearing from stakeholders, why this is so important really is that it really is a human right that if you're sick, you shouldn't be fired from your job, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately it happens, and that's why we need to have protections in place.

One specific, really important area is through cancer treatments, cancer diagnoses, Mr. Speaker. And those can take anywhere from 6 to 10 months to complete. If you're diagnosed with cancer, it's a huge life event. You should be able to take the time you need to seek treatment, to get better, and you should have your job protected on the other side. And so what I'm hearing from stakeholders on this is that this is a very welcome change, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we could see this syncing up with the federal government's EI sickness benefit, would be the best. You know, if we see changes to that federally, there's going to need reforms to EI as we get through this tumultuous tariff environment. I hope that we'll continue to keep an eye on changes that happen at the federal level, make sure that our regulations are in sync in that way.

Other things we're seeing is authority of the director of employment standards, changes there, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues have canvassed that area well that, you know, I will bring up the need for transparency around this process. What used to be taken care of by the courts is now being taken care of by the director, and just want to make sure that we're seeing transparency on their process, how folks are able to appeal that process, etc., Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to move now on to some of the more problematic amendments that I see in this legislation, and I'm going to start with the changing of the definition of a day, Mr. Speaker. This amendment would allow employers to choose between using a calendar day or a 24-hour consecutive period for the purposes of work schedules and overtime provisions.

For the purposes of overtime, the SEA, or *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, currently defines a day to mean a period of consecutive 24 hours and does not follow a calendar day. Since this 24-hour period can run between calendar days, this can impact employees' ability to access overtime. Bill 5 proposes an amendment that would allow employers to choose between defining a day, for the purposes of overtime, to mean a calendar day or a period of 24 hours.

So we have a lot of questions around this. Again I'm going to be asking those questions tomorrow in committee. We really want to figure out, you know, who's asking for these changes, why the

changes, and who's this benefiting. Will workers have the opportunity to challenge if their employer is trying to set them in one and they want the other, etc.? So I'm just going to read a couple of the concerns that were brought to me on this area. And so I think it gives a better picture of why it's really concerning to see this change.

The key concerns around it are how rest periods will become compromised if we see it shifted from 24 hours to a calendar-day process, Mr. Speaker. *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* again requires eight-hour rest periods per day, section 2-13(1). Defining a day as a calendar day, 12 a.m. to 11:59 p.m., allows employers to schedule shifts that don't provide adequate rest. A worker finishes a shift at midnight and starts again at 8 a.m., Mr. Speaker. On paper they meet the requirement, but in reality they don't get enough sleep due to travel times, personal obligations.

I know, Mr. Speaker, when we're working here till 10:30 at night, you know, you get home and you're still ready to do stuff. You know, you're not just going to go right to bed. And then we start the next day pretty early, Mr. Speaker. And so when you think about that experience, you know that if you're working till 11:59 p.m. and you're scheduled to 8, you're not getting that safe eight-hour sleep in that process, Mr. Speaker.

And you know what? This change is really going to impact service and retail workers. And there's a few impacts to service and retail workers in this Act, and I'll talk about another instance of that in a moment. But workers in restaurants and retail could be scheduled to close late at night — so it could be up to that 11:59 p.m. moment — and asked to open or serve again in the early morning, making fatigue a serious concern. Someone working 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. and then 8 to 4 the next day effectively works 16 hours within a 24-hour period. But changing the 24-hour period to a calendar day would mean that they no longer have to pay overtime for that person, and they're not getting the adequate rest.

So again we're looking at overtime loopholes, Mr. Speaker. The law 2-18(1) requires overtime at eight hours per day or 40 hours per week. Under the calendar definition, a worker scheduled 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. on Tuesday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday would not qualify for overtime even though they've worked well over 18 hours in that rolling period, Mr. Speaker. Employers could extend shifts past midnight, and we know it happens in the retail and in the service industry. We always see, you know, "Oh, we're short-staffed. We need you to stay on a little later." So we're seeing where a new day now is pushed out even more.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? What it really comes down to is that fatigued workers are unsafe workers. Reduced rest periods lead to increased risk of accidents, mistakes, and injuries. The issue is made worse by other legislative changes, as I mentioned, by reducing mandatory rest periods for retail and part-time workers, Mr. Speaker. We know that in retail and the service industry, one slip is an injury in a restaurant. You're in a retail situation where you are restocking in the back, and you haven't had your night's sleep, and suddenly things are on the floor. You're on the floor. You're injured. You've injured someone else, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, again we're on Day of Mourning, and those are really important considerations that we need to be looking at in

this legislation.

Bottom line, the change fails the workplace safety test. It does not benefit workers. It unbalances the scale in the direction of the employer. Any labour amendments must prioritize worker safety. This proposal fails to meet that standard and could create dangerous working conditions.

The next one that we have a little bit of certainly questions, seems problematic, Mr. Speaker, is increasing the number of group terminations. The amendment aims to allow increasing the threshold of when workers and employers are required to notify employees, the minister, and the union of a group termination from 10 to 25 employees, Mr. Speaker. Under the SEA employers are required to provide group termination notice if they are letting go 10 or more employees.

You know, again we're asking, who's asking for this? Who has the ear of the government in this process? You know, it screams of economic confidence to allow employers to fire people easier, Mr. Speaker. And we're going into a very tumultuous environment. We should be supporting workers through this process, not making it easier for your employer to let you go.

Now I'll go into a few other housekeeping amendments that we found. There's quite a few housekeeping amendments. I'm just going to talk about the ones that we have flagged, that we find problematic. You know, section 9-13 would change the requirement for reviews of each part of the Act from five-year interval to 10-year interval.

You know, so much is changing in the labour environment, even since the process of this amendment started, Mr. Speaker. AI [artificial intelligence], gig economy, work from home changes the way people work. We need a responsive legislative framework, one responsive, that meets the needs of businesses, employers, and workers, Mr. Speaker. And moving review processes from 5 to 10 years doesn't do that.

I can't even imagine what work is going to look like 10 years from now. You know, technology. We used to have computers as big as rooms; now computers sit in our pockets. So I really think we have to make sure that we're looking at making sure that this legislation is as up to date as possible, again because it affects so many people.

We see part-time workers participate in modified work arrangements where overtime is paid after a specific number of hours as opposed to existing eight hours. Mr. Speaker, again I'm hearing a lot of concerns about modified work arrangements from stakeholders already being abused through the regulations. But also the idea that part-time employees, aren't they supposed to be working on a modified work arrangement? Like that's the whole point of part-time work is that you do hours when needed, Mr. Speaker. So really there's some questions there, a question mark around why we need to change the regulations for part-time workers and build in modified work arrangements for folks who really shouldn't be paid overtime, when you think about it.

Removing requirements for providing two consecutive days off every week to employees in the retail sector instead to be in line now with other sectors. You know, Mr. Speaker, when Brad Wall became premier in 2007, Saskatchewan workers had a defined

weekend in *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. Now 2025 under this Premier, the definition of the weekend will all but be gone. Folks will not see two consecutive days off.

[15:15]

Again I understand there are needs for retail and for service industry, Mr. Speaker, but we have to be looking at this with a closer lens and understand why are we taking away two consecutive days off. You know, the two consecutive days off mean that you get rest. We've seen studies that show if you get three days off how much higher productivity goes, and four-day work week studies across the world. And so you know, we're really puzzled by the idea that we would look at removing the requirements for making sure that folks have rest.

And certainly there's some rules around part-time work. Again part-time employees, you know, they work different work arrangements. But full-time employees, if you're getting one day off on a Monday, and your next day off is on Thursday, you know, what kind of quality of life does that offer? People need rest, Mr. Speaker. Again we talk to safety.

Lastly, what we're seeing here is another amendment clarifying that employees need to be paid wages in cash. Really a big question mark around this one, Mr. Speaker. I think some of the concerns here is that, you know, if you have spousal payments, how do we track those spousal payments when your employer is paying you in cash, Mr. Speaker? And so again another area where we have a question mark. We'll be asking some questions.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've talked long enough on Bill 5. I'm getting some head nods over here from my colleagues and so I'm going to jump in here really quick to some of the things that we're missing in this Act. You know, we're seeing no increase to minimum wage in this opening of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. Again we're facing pandemic inflation . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pardon me? Take us to church. I'll be here all night folks.

Inflationary costs, Mr. Speaker. Cost-of-living crisis. Tariff trade war. We're seeing the lowest in the country in minimum wage here in Saskatchewan. Even after all the increases under this provincial government, Saskatchewan is still last in the country for minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, we're tied with Alberta for the lowest minimum wage in the country. And you know it is shameful, Mr. Speaker. Alberta set their minimum wage to \$15 under the Rachel Notley government. And I know we're not talking about the Alberta government's record here, Mr. Speaker, but they haven't seen an increase either. Since that change of \$15, no increase to minimum wage. And when we got to \$15, we joined the club of being last in the country.

You know what? There's a lot of solutions to this. There are solutions we could look at, like regional minimum wages, allowing different regions of our province to set a different minimum wage based on costs of living, based on various needs of their communities. We're seeing living wages in Saskatoon differ but float around 16 or 17, Mr. Speaker.

Minimum wage is important. We know that 8 to 10 per cent of

Canadian workers are working at minimum wage in Canada right now — a big portion of our economy, often the most vulnerable, often new Canadians, marginalized groups, Mr. Speaker.

What we're also missing from this is no recognition of National Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday. You know, the National Truth and Reconciliation stat holiday was brought forward by a Saskatchewan MP [Member of Parliament], Georgina Jolibois, but unfortunately isn't recognized in Saskatchewan. You know, it's time to join other provinces like BC [British Columbia], PEI [Prince Edward Island], Manitoba, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon, Mr. Speaker, in recognizing National Truth and Reconciliation as a holiday.

National Truth and Reconciliation Day is a day for all Canadians to remember those who didn't make it home from residential schools. It's an opportunity for our Saskatchewan community to come together and reflect on the past, acknowledge the truth, and work to reconcile for the future. A stat holiday would mean that employees could engage in reconciliation in their communities. They can continue to learn about reconciliation in their workplaces, but it would allow folks to find those opportunities to engage with reconciliation if they were able to have that day off.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's particularly important . . . Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of Indigenous people in the country. It's time to act now. This is an important part of a reconciliation journey. It's a Call to Action, Mr. Speaker. So I would challenge this government to accept that Call to Action and recognize National Truth and Reconciliation Day as a statutory holiday.

Another thing we're missing in Bill 5: no paid sick days. You know, we have seen . . . we've lived through a pandemic. Labour and health care advocates have been advocating for paid sick days, Mr. Speaker. You know, we asked workers during that very pandemic to stay home if they were sick. Unfortunately for many workers, this meant going without pay. When you have a choice between going to work to make money to afford groceries and you're sick and you know that you're not getting paid that day and you've got bills to pay at the end of the month, what are you going to do? You're going to work sick.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have called for paid sick days. I'm going to look at what other jurisdictions are doing. I should note that this opposition moved a priority motion in 2021, my colleague from Saskatoon University, to include 10 paid sick days for workers, Mr. Speaker. We saw that motion voted down.

Mr. Speaker, I clearly remember being a little civilian back in the day, not an MLA yet. And I was just a small civilian. And I remember picking up my phone and seeing a reel that this team had done after the priority motion of paid sick days had failed, Mr. Speaker. And I thought to myself, what on earth; this is what's happening in our province. Priority motions to give folks paid sick days during a pandemic had failed. Even Doug Ford gave sick days. Now I'm giving him much credit because he pulled those sick days back, Mr. Speaker, after the pandemic. But I saw that reel and I was like, oh my God, these people that are . . . that the 12-people opposition in Saskatchewan was fighting for what people needed most in this province during the most important time.

Like I really do. I think it was an important moment. I said, I've got to do this; I've got to stop sitting on the sidelines and I've got to get in that place in Regina and start fighting with that crew of folks who are doing such important work. And I'm so honoured to stand here with those folks who were in that caucus at the time and who did that important work, Mr. Speaker. Again you know, such an important policy that we could change the lives of folks in Saskatchewan.

Quickly, I know I'm talking so much here. My one bill of the year here, Mr. Speaker, so I've got to make it count. You know, we have BC, five paid sick days after 90 days of employment. PEI, employees are entitled to one paid sick day for every 12 months of employment up to three days. So you can get three days after three years of employment, Mr. Speaker. Quebec, two sick days after 90 days of employment. The federal government provides 10 paid sick days that are accrued over time of service.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think at this point we are just asking for the bare minimum. Let's get out of back of the pack, Mr. Speaker. Let's get out of last in the country. Let's get out of that back-of-the-pack state of being a province with no paid sick days. Let's look at any one of these options that I just mentioned. You know, let's just look to Quebec and see if we can meet that, Mr. Speaker. So again another challenge I'll lay down to the Saskatchewan Party government: let's bring paid sick days.

Now I had a fantastic article from *Maclean's* that I was going to quote. Again I think I have talked long enough. Mr. Speaker, I've got a few more points to make. You know, I guess I'm so used to that six-hour speech that I did during the emergency session, whenever I get up I just want to talk for hours at this point, Mr. Speaker. I know I've got to let these people, well let all of us get to other work too, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we have seen no updates to the definition of gig workers in Bill 5. Again a request from labour stakeholders. We need to be defining gig workers. It's far too easy for employers to label gig workers and get out of paying important dues to those folks. And we're seeing the gig economy is booming. We see it every day, more and more options for folks who are seeing their wage, their livelihood, come from a gig economy — artists, taxi drivers running an Uber after their already eight-hour day, Mr. Speaker. We've got to be protecting these folks.

Right to disconnect, Mr. Speaker. Right to disconnect was in the request for proposals, but we don't see any right to disconnect legislation brought forward, Mr. Speaker. And I know that stakeholders were asking for this. They wrote in about that, Mr. Speaker.

No wage theft provisions, Mr. Speaker. And lastly, no pay equity legislation, Mr. Speaker, that we see. No pay equity provisions are included in Bill 5 to bring us to parity for both men and women in the workplace. We're also seeing no provisions for limiting the use of non-disclosure agreements, something that my colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre championed during her time as Labour critic, Mr. Speaker.

You know, all in all, Mr. Speaker, important legislation. I think I've put enough comments on the record here today. I've laid down a few challenges to this provincial government to look at some ways that we can improve the lives of Saskatchewan people

right here. And I know that I'll continue to be engaging with stakeholders and I'll have more questions tomorrow at committee. And so, Mr. Speaker, with that I am prepared to allow this bill to move on to its next stages.

Speaker Goudy: — The question before the Assembly is the motion made by the minister that Bill No. 5, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2024* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Agreed? Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Remote and Rural Health.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Bill No. 14

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Jeremy Harrison that **Bill No. 14 — *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2025*** be now read a second time.]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to get to rise today and just put a couple of comments on the record in regards to Bill 14, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act*.

Saskatchewan could and should be a leader in reliable, affordable, sustainable power generation. Saskatchewan's at the heart of Canada, and we could be pumping power across Western Canada. We have uranium, solar, wind, natural gas, the world's first post-combustion CCS [carbon capture and storage] plant. We can and we should generate more power than we need and work with other provinces to keep the lights on, to grow our country, fuel industry, defend the North, and ensure Canadian energy sovereignty.

The work of the Crown and the work of SaskPower should be undertaken diligently and thoughtfully by the skilled and capable public servants and experts who've been tasked with shepherding this invaluable asset. And this bill seeks to increase the borrowing limit of SaskPower from 10 to \$14 billion, Mr. Speaker — a whole lot of money — and in increasing the borrowing limit of the Crown, SaskPower must and should look to the future, take an all-of-the-above approach when it comes to power generation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in committee this spring the opposition asked questions on behalf of this province, the workers, the impacted communities, and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan about

SaskPower's future supply mix in planning for what the future of power generation could and should look like here in Saskatchewan — a monumentally important task. We asked questions about business and capital planning, on debt, return on equity, all fundamental questions. But the minister was unable or unwilling to answer any questions about SaskPower's plan for the future capital planning, Mr. Speaker.

And with SaskPower carrying a third of the province's debt and now looking to increase its borrowing and debt capacity by 40 per cent, these are decisions that should be made in the interests of Saskatchewan people, not political divisiveness. And these are decisions that merit respect, accountability, and transparency. And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a promise to the people of Saskatchewan, a commitment to respect and civility in this legislature and I assume the committees that serve it as well. Leaders who make promises, Mr. Speaker, ought to keep them.

Saskatchewan's potential for energy production, for security, and for power generation is boundless. It would be a real shame, Mr. Speaker, to weigh it down with politics. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to committee, and I'm prepared to allow this bill to pass to its next stage.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has moved to adjourn debate . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, wants to pass it on. Here we go. Sorry. The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 14, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2025* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading.

Speaker Goudy: — To which committee shall the bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Remote and Rural Health.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Speaker Goudy: — The bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 15

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Alana Ross that **Bill No. 15 — *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2025/Loi modificative de 2025 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard*** be now read a second time.]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis.

[15:30]

Don McBean: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. I'm very pleased to stand and speak to *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2025*. As the shadow cabinet minister for SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming

Authority], it's my honour to address this and at the end of my comments move it toward committee. It's a fairly thin, two-item amendment that has been spoken to a number of times.

I'll remind people that, you know, there's a little bit of tinkering to allow debt repayment with interest on those that might be lax in following through with their payments. There's a curious rise from 10,000 to \$25,000 of the penalty. Now as near as I'm able to understand, this actually just brings it in line with other Crown corporations. And in the sense that the SLGA should at least have the same amount of power as the other Crowns, it's difficult to say that that shouldn't be happening.

What I have been curious about and have yet to really get a very clear understanding on is what the problem was that caused this amendment to come forward. There's no understanding that this was a problem. In schools, in life, people were always looking for rules by which they could fix problems. And very often the question was, is it a problem? Like we needed a rule for something that wasn't really going to be a problem for us. And I'm very interested in entering into committee to see if there is something behind this, in particular because a lot of this seems to be going to the on-reserve gaming employees. And as new as I am to this world of the political, of the politics, what I do know in life is that usually when you lift up a rock there's something rotten underneath it. Maybe I'm mixing some metaphors there.

But I'm very interested in knowing why this has been specifically targeted. In the reaching out to the stakeholders as I have been able to, I'm not aware that this was an ongoing issue for people. So I'm very curious if someone in a carrel somewhere just decided that, oh, there's not a perfect alignment here and so we need to make this, you know, this wordsmithing to make everything appear equal. But whenever we're dealing with especially the on-reserve gaming situation I'm very cautious and curious to know what it is that is motivating this.

The idea of a rule fixing a problem always frustrated me. It continues to frustrate me because it's more the understanding, it's the upstream idea behind what might be perceived as a problem to know . . . Because a rule doesn't fix a problem, I guess is really where I'm going to.

If I take it back to my school environment, you know, if the grade 7s were performing some untoward act, teachers might want a rule to fix it, whereas it was always my understanding that talking to the grade 7s usually was a better strategy — finding out why they're doing what they were doing. And very often they knew very well and they could, you know, with a bit of dialogue, with a bit of back and forth we could shine a light on the problem, make the problem go away without having to enforce some sort of rule.

Especially rules with those incremental . . . you know, strike one, strike two, strike . . . oh boy, now you're in trouble, strike three. Because in my experience and I think many people's experience in life, if you're not adhering to some expectation, making a punitive rule is unlikely to fix that. Or if it is, you're just moving the problem a little farther into the darkness and it's going to come out somewhere else.

So while on the surface it looks to me like aligning the SLGA with other Crown corporations' ability to effect penalty for

unpaid, etc., that makes a good deal of sense. I guess we'd like to have consistency. But as I have said a few times now, I'm very curious as to what the problem was, what's the motivation behind this. And I look forward to hopefully getting some of the answers to that.

And with that, I'm happy to allow the amendment of the alcohol and gaming regulation to move to the next stage.

Speaker Goudy: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 15, *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2025* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Speaker Goudy: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 18

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Jeremy Cockrill that **Bill No. 18 — *The Regulated Health Professions Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter into debate today on Bill No. 18, *The Regulated Health Professions Act*. There are, I think it was around 60 pages of legislation here, Mr. Speaker. I will not be going through every page in a detailed fashion today, but I do want to put some comments on the record here.

What this legislation seeks to do is to standardize some of the operations that exist within all regulated health professions. So we have around 30 of them in this province. And essentially this is an organization that helps to create the standards for a profession, sets up their licensing, their disciplinary bodies, etc., Mr. Speaker.

So there's a tremendous amount of paperwork involved in these organizations, and what this legislation seeks to do is to standardize that. So it's been referred to as umbrella legislation, the umbrella legislation, by many of the regulators. It's been years in the making, and I know there have been various amounts of consultation over the years. And it's been a long time coming and is similar to what a lot of other jurisdictions are doing.

So I've been busy having meetings with not all 30 of these regulators but many of them, Mr. Speaker, to get a sense of how they feel about this legislation and whether their concerns have

been addressed in their consultations with the ministry. I do have a lot of questions for the minister, as the shadow minister for Health in the official opposition, that I'll be planning to bring forward in committee.

Some of those questions involve, based on the feedback I've received: the tremendous amount of work that's required to get an active regulatory body in line with these regulations; the timelines for implementation and whether it's reasonable, the timelines that are being expected considering what's happened in other jurisdictions; the resources that are available to assist with meeting these timelines, especially for the smaller regulators that only have, you know, a small skeleton staff that needs to complete some of this work; the fact that there are only a few lawyers who do this type of work and will be helping all of the regulators as they work to bring themselves in line with the legislation; how the framework was determined; and how this round of consultation took place.

So I'll be bringing forward those questions to the minister and look forward to having those conversations. But with that, I'm prepared to allow this to move on to its next steps.

Speaker Goudy: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 18, *The Regulated Health Professions Act* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — To the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Bill No. 19

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Jeremy Cockrill that **Bill No. 19 — *The Regulated Health Professions Consequential Amendments Act, 2025/Loi de 2025 corrélative de la loi intitulée The Regulated Health Professions Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to enter into debate on Bill No. 19. This is a consequential amendment Act that goes with Bill No. 18. So if anyone is interested in learning about it, they should consult all of the remarks on Bill No. 18, which have been heavily weighted in that direction.

Essentially what a consequential amendment Act does is amends other pieces of legislation that are required to be amended in line

with the law that is changing here. So we will save some of those questions for committee, and I am prepared to allow this to move on to its next steps as well.

Speaker Goudy: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 19, *The Regulated Health Professions Consequential Amendments Act, 2025* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — To the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Bill No. 21

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Eric Schmalz that **Bill No. 21 — *The Construction Codes (Derelict Buildings) Amendment Act, 2025*** be now read a second time.]

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

April ChiefCalf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the Legislative Assembly today to enter into debate on Bill 21, *The Construction Codes (Derelict Buildings) Amendment Act, 2025*.

This bill proposes to amend construction standards in order to permit the burning of certain derelict buildings. Now, Mr. Speaker, this bill raises a number of issues that are of concern to me, and I am thankful to have the opportunity to address these concerns and have them recorded in *Hansard* today.

I believe that it is important that as elected officials, we do our due diligence and engage with all stakeholders when we're passing these bills through. This one, this bill has some potential repercussions for firefighters, for the environment, and for neighbours adjacent to the derelict buildings in question. And therefore I think we must ensure that we have consulted with all stakeholders and conducted thorough research before passing this bill.

So my first step in preparing to debate this bill was to search some news articles and media releases related to the bill. And in doing so, I discovered that SARM, or the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, had in fact asked the government for assistance in addressing the issue of these increasing numbers of derelict buildings in their communities.

And as of a February 19th news release, SARM noted that rural

municipalities struggle with financial barriers, legal issues, and the technical means to maintain, renovate, or dispose of abandoned buildings. And these abandoned buildings can pose a number of threats to communities, including fire hazards, structural safety issues, increased criminal activity, health risks from mould and other hazardous materials, and of course infestations from pests. And as well, they can be an eyesore and an expense.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that most of us would agree that it is imperative to address the situation with derelict buildings and to support rural municipalities to do so. They shouldn't have to assume the burden and expense all on their own.

[15:45]

However I will point out that the media release from SARM that I examined was actually asking for financial assistance from the provincial government. They were suggesting a derelict building grant program to help with decommissioning of sites, landfill management, and cleanup so that the area could be returned to its natural state or provide a base for future construction. The media release did not ask for changing regulations to the Construction Code in order to permit burning of derelict buildings or providing opportunities for training volunteer firefighters, which is the direction that Bill 21 takes.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is my first concern with Bill 21. Is this really what municipalities were asking for when it comes to assistance with managing derelict buildings, and are the other options going to be explored?

So, Mr. Speaker, this bill is very short. It proposes the following changes: first, to add the definition of "derelict building," which means "any building that is declared to be a derelict building in accordance with the regulations." And the regulations are not specified here. Secondly it proposes to add the clause:

the minister may create, develop, adopt, coordinate and implement policies, strategies, objectives, guidelines, programs, services and administrative procedures or similar instruments to carry out the purposes of this Act.

So my understanding is that the minister is in the position to make the changes, and it doesn't elaborate further on those powers. And then finally it proposes to add the clause, "any derelict building to be demolished by fire in accordance with the regulations," to section 2 of *The Construction Codes Act*, which in effect would exempt burning derelict buildings from the standards of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, my biggest concern with these proposed changes is that using fire to deal with derelict buildings poses a number of risks, including risks to firefighters, both volunteer and professional; risks to the environment in terms of toxins that could be dispersed into the air and left in the ground after the burn; and of course, risks to neighbouring properties should a fire get out of hand.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that this bill is proposing to exempt derelict buildings designated for demolition by fire from the construction Act, and part of this strategy is to allow for volunteer firefighters to have the opportunity to practise putting

out fires using these buildings. And in speaking with some firefighters, this is done at times.

So I actually have a number of retired firefighters in my circle, two in my family. And so I have talked to them quite a bit about this and I've also talked to some firefighters from the city of Saskatoon as well. And I just want to say that there are some things about this bill that don't really make sense.

So for example, it seems that there are a lot of abandoned buildings in certain areas. But these training exercises are usually only done once or twice a year, so that while they might allow for volunteer firefighters to learn more about how fire works and how to properly use safety gear, the point of the training is also to learn how to extinguish a fire, which is counterproductive to demolishing a building by fire because you want to let it burn to the ground. As well, it should be noted that there are training facilities in the province for this purpose where new and volunteer firefighters can learn in a supervised and contained environment.

Mr. Speaker, it also seems counterproductive this session to have one bill that proposes to amend *The Workers' Compensation Act* in order to provide compensation for wildland firefighters who get cancer from firefighting, and then here we have a bill that sets up volunteer firefighters and their supervisors to actually be at an increased risk for getting cancer and other potential injuries from firefighting.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me explain. Abandoned and derelict buildings that were built before the 1970s and 1980s are likely to contain toxins such as lead paint and asbestos. So for example, when lead paint is burned, these toxins do get into the air and they pose a health hazard to the firefighters as well as to others who reside in the area. These buildings may contain other hazardous materials such as batteries or chemicals, and burning these materials could be very damaging again to the health for the firefighters involved in the demolition of these buildings.

Asphalt shingles. Apparently I went down a rabbit hole doing a lot of research on this, and asphalt shingles apparently don't burn. So they along with all the other residue left from this burn, still need to be disposed of, and this provides yet another health risk to those involved in the process.

And I wanted to speak a little more in detail about asbestos. Because asbestos is fire-resistant, but when it's exposed to the heat and when it's set on fire, it actually disintegrates and the particles get released into the air and into the ground. And of course inhaling this is a cancer risk.

And I noted that there was an article from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] from April 21st where the mayor of Nipawin was actually talking about asbestos and asked if asbestos in a building would actually be a barrier to this bill, this proposal to burn these buildings down and demolish the building and train firefighters. And they were told by the minister, no, the asbestos would not prevent that from happening. So that was of concern to me.

Another concern that I have is that a lot of volunteer firefighters are often very young people. And I think we want to be very careful when we have a workforce, whether it's volunteer or paid

young people, that we don't put them at risk. You know, these are young people that might not always know . . . When we're young, we think we're invincible, right? We really do. So we don't want to put these young people at risk in these training exercises, you know, inhaling chemicals, inhaling toxins that can put their lungs at risk.

So in addition to the health risks that can result from this burning process, there is also the potential that fire could spread from the site to neighbouring properties, affecting properties, crops, and animals. So when I say that I have firefighters that are retired in my family circle, my brother-in-law on my husband's side was the chief of the firefighter department, the fire department on my husband's First Nation. And so they dealt with a lot of grass fires. And I actually learned a lot about grass fires by talking about him and how so many of these fires are started during controlled burns. And just, you know, weather conditions and other elements, they get out of hand, right, and they can cause a lot of damage. So we want to be careful about that.

And then something that I didn't think about but somebody mentioned this to me, Mr. Speaker, that pests live in these abandoned buildings. And when the building is destroyed — if they survive the fire, if they escape, if they get out — they're going to move to another building, right? So they might be then moving on to infest a building where it's even more problematic that they're moving into that building. So I think that's an issue that needs to be taken into consideration when burning these buildings down.

And I do remember, as a kid, visiting my dad's old farmhouse, right, so this was quite the adventure. It felt like it was haunted. It was quite fun to go into this old house, and there was antiques. But you know, we were worried that the roof was going to fall on our heads, and there were bats, mice, and other critters living in that house. So yeah, we're worried about maybe some of those pests moving into other buildings in the area.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that we do understand the dilemma that rural municipalities are facing when it comes to finding ways to demolish, to maintain, or to renovate abandoned buildings. But we need to find a safe strategy to address these concerns, and the truth is that it is likely going to cost money beyond a can of gasoline and some matches. So I look forward to more debate and of course consultation with stakeholders, including firefighters and rural municipal leaders, on this bill.

With that I move to adjourn debate on Bill 21, *The Construction Codes (Derelict Buildings) Amendment Act* of 2025. Thank you for listening.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved that this Assembly do

now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:55.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
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Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan Corporation

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Education

Hon. Terry Jenson
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Travis Keisig
Minister of Environment

Hon. David Marit
Minister of Highways
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the
Global Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Tim McLeod
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

Hon. Jim Reiter
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Alana Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Eric Schmalz
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for
First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Colleen Young
Minister of Energy and Resources