



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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Regina University

Kevin Kasun
Prince Albert Carlton

Kevin Weedmark
Moosomin-Montmartre

[The committee met at 15:21.]

Chair D. Harrison: — Welcome to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I'm your Chair, Daryl Harrison. The others on the committee: Tajinder Grewal, Racquel Hilbert, Sally Housser, Kevin Kasun, Kevin Weedmark. And we will have a substitution when they arrive, but we'll deal with that then.

Bill No. 24 — *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act*

Clause 1

Chair D. Harrison: — Today we'll be considering Bill No. 24, *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act*. We will begin our consideration with clause 1, short title. Minister Kaeding is here with his ministry officials. I would ask that officials please state their names before speaking for the first time, and please don't touch the microphones. The *Hansard* operator will turn your microphone on when you are speaking to the committee. Minister Kaeding, please make your opening comments and introduce your officials.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Good afternoon, everyone. Committee members, I am pleased to be here today to discuss *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act*. Joining me today is Jodi Banks, our deputy minister; Aaron Wirth, our ADM [assistant deputy minister] of strategic policy and competitiveness; and Kareen Holtby, our executive director of strategic policy and analysis; and certainly Michelle Lang, our chief of staff; and Arlie Matisho, our MA [ministerial assistant] in comms.

Mr. Chair, in response to tariffs implemented by the US [United States], China, and India, we've worked very hard to advance internal trade efforts throughout our country. And we've done so because trade within Canada is just as vital to our economic prosperity as international exports. We export more to provinces like Alberta and Ontario than we do to China or any specific US state. Nearly 23 per cent of the goods and services that we produce are exported within Canada alone.

Saskatchewan is a proud participant in the committee of internal trade, which has been making some great progress on enhancing the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. You might recall a number of outcomes announced last summer from this committee. And a couple of them to note would include reducing party-specific exceptions under the agreement by 30 per cent, concluding the Canadian mutual recognition on the sale of goods, concluding negotiations on the financial services chapter, and cross-Canada commitment to a 30-day service standard for processing labour mobility applications.

Eleven jurisdictions also signed an MOU [memorandum of understanding] committed to implementing direct-to-consumer alcohol sales. And we also signed MOUs to advance internal trade bilaterally with Manitoba, Ontario, and PEI [Prince Edward Island].

These are all examples of how Saskatchewan continues to lead the way in reducing barriers and making it easier to do business across the nation. And *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade*

Promotion Act allows us to reach even further. It enables the province to mutually recognize goods and services from other jurisdictions. For example, a good that is acceptable for sale in another province can be sold in Saskatchewan without additional approvals, or a service offered in another province can also be offered in our province without significant red tape.

And this legislation enables us to participate in and implement mutual recognition agreements signed by jurisdictions across Canada. This is an important step in increasing market access for Saskatchewan products. And most importantly, it means that businesses won't need to go through unnecessary approval processes, saving them time, effort, and reducing red tape. It approaches mutual recognition on a case-by-case basis and can be implemented through changes to regulations and through cabinet decision making.

The Act includes general exceptions for Saskatchewan Crown corporations, procurement processes, and occupations covered under *The Labour Mobility and Fair Registration Practices Act*. It also allows for exceptions to be granted for reasons including public health, public safety, and consumer protection. All of this ensures that we can be responsive to the needs of Saskatchewan businesses.

This Act will reduce costs for businesses, expand market access, and strengthen Canadian internal economy, leading to more opportunities, jobs, and services the people of this province need. And that's really what's at the heart of the Act, so making sure we're doing everything possible that Saskatchewan businesses and people can do to succeed. So with that, we certainly welcome any questions that the committee may have for us.

Chair D. Harrison: — Thank you, Minister. Just before we get on to questions, I will say that Jordan McPhail has chitted in for Meara Conway. So welcome, Jordan.

I'll open the floor to questions, and I recognize MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Housser.

Sally Housser: — Great. Thank you very much, Minister, and to all your officials for being here today. We're largely supportive of this bill. So I've got a few questions but may not need the full half-hour even so. And go outside and get the last bit of warmth before the snow sets in this evening.

But if you could just start, Minister, by maybe talking broadly about what stakeholders you and your ministry and officials have consulted through this process obviously, you know, from different provinces but also from within Saskatchewan, different people who provide those goods and services that we are looking to facilitate interprovincial trade with.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — So I think we'll maybe start at the top down. We've been engaging with the 13 jurisdictions across Canada, including Canada, and been at this since probably pre-2025. But certainly I've been at this since 2025 almost on a monthly basis, and even more engagement at the deputy minister and the officials level. So that's been ongoing, and keep adding more and more to the discussions as we go along.

And then I'll have Aaron talk to you about ultimately what we've

been doing just internally within government, what we've been doing with our outside stakeholders, interprovincial stakeholders. And then certainly we've been talking to the chamber. Represents businesses very well here. Different industry associations that we talk to on a regular basis, ultimately considered our stakeholders, from manufacturers to producers, you know, ag sector. So we've been having those ongoing conversations every chance we get. But maybe get Aaron to detail kind of who we've been engaging with.

Aaron Wirth: — Sure. Aaron Wirth, the assistant deputy minister for strategic policy and competitiveness at Trade and Export Development. Just building on what the minister said, we've been at this for quite a few years now. And so we've been engaging definitely across all 14 federal and provincial jurisdictions for sure, making sure that we're all working in lockstep to prop up our various legislation so that we can enable mutual recognition under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

Internally within Saskatchewan, obviously we've been working very closely with all of our ministries and agencies, our internal stakeholders — in particular our regulators, who are directly impacted by this — to make sure that this is the right legislation at the right time and works for all of them.

[15:30]

And then in terms of industry and businesses, for many years we've been working and hearing a lot from those industries and those industry associations and individual businesses just about the need for this, about the red tape that exists across provincial and territorial boundaries, and the need to address that red tape to help grow our economy, particularly in face of US tariff threats. And so lots of conversations with chambers of commerce, industry associations, and individual businesses as part of our ongoing outreach.

And then of course, you know, if and once legislation is passed, we have a system where businesses can come and raise barriers to us and governments can raise barriers and regulators can raise barriers with us. So we have a very open and accessible process whereby businesses can directly identify barriers they face, again applying to Saskatchewan businesses or out-of-province businesses as well.

And we'll continue to engage with our stakeholders. In fact we'll make sure that we have various mechanisms and portals where they can identify barriers for us and submit that to us so that we can respond and assess the legitimacy of those barriers, the economic impacts of those barriers, and then engage the relevant regulator.

Sally Houser: — Thank you very much. Could you explain to me how the provisions of this bill, with respect to the sale of goods, how does that specifically differ or align with the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the Sale of Goods?

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — I'm going to have Kareen, who has spent probably . . . I'm not sure how much of her life. I'm assuming 23 hours a day on this file. So I think we better leave it with someone who has spent an awful lot of their time understanding this file. So Kareen.

Kareen Holtby: — Okay, thank you. Kareen Holtby, executive director, strategic policy and analysis. So this legislation is aligned with the Canadian mutual recognition . . . or it's complementary to the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement. This legislation allows us to enable that agreement. It's enabling legislation.

And so overall the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement is a multilateral agreement focused on reducing barriers to internal trade through mutual recognition, similar to our Act. And it's on the sale of goods between jurisdictions. So the scope of our Act is broader as it includes services. A big difference is the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement is a multilateral agreement including most jurisdictions from across Canada, whereas our Act is just for Saskatchewan.

I talked a bit about scope. So the CMRA [Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the Sale of Goods] scopes out certain goods. So it includes most goods but it scopes out items like food, beverages, alcohol, tobacco, live animals, plants, cannabis. And again services are not included in the CMRA.

We have listed exceptions in the CMRA of things that we are not mutually recognizing at this time and our Act takes a different approach to that. So basically our Act is for us and the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement is a legally binding agreement with parties across Canada.

Sally Houser: — Right, and I know this is just on the goods, but obviously for this current Bill 24, it also covers goods, just not the services for the CMRA. But when you talked about those exclusions in the CMRA — I think it's food, cannabis, alcohol, live animals — are those included? And I know like cross-provincial sale of alcohol is something that has been, you know, one of the top things that comes up when people are talking about interprovincial trade. Is that covered under Bill 24 and not covered in the CMRA?

Kareen Holtby: — So our Act doesn't give us legal authority that we don't have. So the federal government is responsible and has authority for the interprovincial movement of food and beverages. And so this Act does not allow us to mutually recognize food and beverages. And in terms of alcohol, Crowns are exempt from this Act. And so SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] as a treasury board Crown is exempt from the Act. However we are doing, the minister is doing work at the committee on internal trade on direct-to-consumer alcohol sales.

Sally Houser: — Okay. And sorry, I'm not deliberately trying to be obtuse here. But so is it fair to say that just on the sale-of-goods side, that we're really just enabling and totally aligned with the CMRA?

Kareen Holtby: — Yeah, for the most part.

Sally Houser: — Okay. All good. I'm always interested, you know, with an Act or legislation, the problem we're trying to solve, right.

Okay, that's great. So could you talk to me a bit about in which regulatory sectors, or even just some examples of where Saskatchewan's regulations are more stringent than other

provinces or less stringent?

Kareen Holtby: — Thanks for the question. So I think the question was about where we have more stringent requirements or where we don't. And so the sort of . . . the answer is, overall, we don't have a great understanding of where our requirements are better or worse than other provinces.

We do have some . . . we do know what our regulatory requirements are related to goods. And so the next step is for . . . and so we talked about identifying exceptions within the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement. And so the next step in that would be for the experts to talk to regulators in the other jurisdiction to understand, is your requirement as safe as ours? Is it the same as ours or is it not?

So that will be a process that our regulators will take with their colleagues in other jurisdictions. But we do have some, like, examples where we know we have requirements that are important. And so I can give a couple of practical examples.

So we have regulatory requirements for pressure vessels such as boilers, and there are differences between jurisdictions. And so we know boilers in Saskatchewan need to be able to operate in lower temperatures than they do in warmer jurisdictions. And so we might not mutually recognize the regulatory requirement in that sector, because we know that mutually recognizing requirements from a warmer jurisdiction might bring risk to consumer protection if the boiler failed to work in Saskatchewan. So that is one example.

Another example would be, Saskatchewan has regulatory requirements that prevent the sale of elm wood without authorization. And so this regulatory requirement was put in place to prevent the spread of Dutch elm disease. There are other jurisdictions who do not have those same regulatory requirements. And so that would be an area we'd be working closely with our regulator colleagues, and we wouldn't necessarily mutually recognize those.

Sally Housser: — Okay. Thanks. Yeah and that's, you know, I'm interested in it. As the minister knows, my colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale put forward a similar bill on interprovincial trade. And our concern around this and what we wanted to explicitly lay out is the concern around a race to the bottom in terms of regulatory requirements, you know, if everybody's deciding we're going to standardize.

I guess what I'm getting at is, kind of, what provisions or considerations have you given to protecting that so we don't all just end up across Canada with the lowest standard that each province has had on any given goods or service?

[15:45]

And I think I'll add to that, because specifically occupational health and safety is a major concern for us in that one.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — So I'd say there's a number of factors that certainly went into the bill that we believe very much supports, you know, the current occupational health and safety requirements that we've got in the province here. A couple of them is, ultimately we took kind of the best practices from other

jurisdictions and just made sure that we were able to, you know, adopt that to what we believe were some of the best practices that were seen in other jurisdictions. We chose not to make it, you know, an automatic approach. And then that gives us a lot of latitude to kind of look at each activity and evaluate them.

So certainly we're going to have input from the regulators, certainly have input from those that are certainly going to benefit or may experience some hardship in dealing with that. So we've got the opportunity to kind of work through that entire process with ultimately everyone who's going to be affected by that.

I'd say, you know, we certainly want to make sure that we've reduced the amount of red tape. And that's probably the biggest issue that we're trying to get in front of here, is let's just keep this a simple, you know, expedited process. And going by that case-by-case approach gives us that latitude to be able to do that.

You know, we've got a lot of exemptions, and we've made sure we've worked that in there. And there's a number of things that if, say, the minister is satisfied on the basis of materials that he receives — documents, you know, reasons provided in one way, shape, or form — that if we need to grant an exemption, we will.

And I'll just identify some of the following exemptions: if it had anything to do with and risked public security and safety; if it had anything to do with risk public order; anything to do with protection of human, animal, or plant life or health; protection of the environment; consumer protection; protection of the health, safety, and well-being of workers; provision of adequate social or health services to all geographic regions in Saskatchewan; if it affected programs for disadvantaged groups; or any other prescribed purposes. The minister has the right to be able to refuse to grant the exemption as well, right, if it's the minimum required and deemed to not fit in some of those parameters.

Sally Housser: — Okay. Thank you, Minister. And just through this process, again I guess specifically on that occupational health and safety, just when I asked earlier in terms of consultation with stakeholders, you listed a number of different chambers, industry, ag sectors. Just wondering if, particularly around the occupational health and safety, that you've met with any unions or any other kind of worker . . . Workers' Compensation, any other kind of professional association focused on workers.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — So we have to make sure everyone understands that the Act doesn't override any current legislation. So we've got those safety factors all factored in, worked in. So all existing rules still exist, right.

We have engaged with LRWS [Labour Relations and Workplace Safety], so that is certainly that main stakeholder that we've engaged there. And then, recognizing that this is done on a case-by-case basis, that we would then have that level of engagement if an entity brought something forward or a regulator brought something forward that we need to address. We then would have that ability to do that.

So the bill gives us that flexibility to have all of those levels of engagement but not be overwhelming, that ultimately we're restricting the ability.

Sally Housser: — Great. And I think finally, Minister, are you

still committed to regulatory reconciliation and co-operation under the Canada free trade framework? And if there's any progress that's been made in that respect.

Kareen Holtby: — So yes, we remain actively engaged in the regulatory reconciliation and co-operation table. It's an officials-level table, and we continue to make progress. For example, there was a reconciliation agreement related to gas fitters that was signed this year.

Sally Houser: — Great. I think that's it for me, Mr. Chair.

Chair D. Harrison: — Thank you. Are there questions from any other committee members? No. Seeing none, we will proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 27 inclusive agreed to.]

Chair D. Harrison: — His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act*.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 24, *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act* without amendment.

Kevin Weedmark: — I so move.

Chair D. Harrison: — MLA Weedmark has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair D. Harrison: — Carried. That concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. MLA Kasun . . . Sorry, I'm ahead of myself.

Minister, would you like to make some closing comments? You're hanging over the edge wanting to. Sorry, my apologies.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — No I'm not, really. No absolutely, and thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I'd say Saskatchewan has been a leader in implementing free and open trade across Canada and has been for a number of years. As a signatory to the New West Partnership Trade Agreement is, I'd say, one of the leading-edge things that we did.

We're certainly very proud in the quick turnaround that we have on labour mobility challenges. You know, we're co-chairing the direct-to-consumer alcohol sales. And I'd say we've been leading by example, and we're going to continue to lead by example.

And very proud of the group that's with us that you have in front of you here today that does spend an awful lot of time in trying to free up and facilitate open trade across Canada, which we know is very important.

So again, I'd like to thank committee members. Certainly like to thank *Hansard* and officials and very much would like thank my

officials for the incredible work that they continue to put into this file. Thank you.

Chair D. Harrison: — Thank you, Minister. To you and your officials, thanks for coming to join us today.

That now concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. MLA Weedmark has moved . . . oh, Kasun, sorry, has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Chair D. Harrison: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 16:00.]