



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

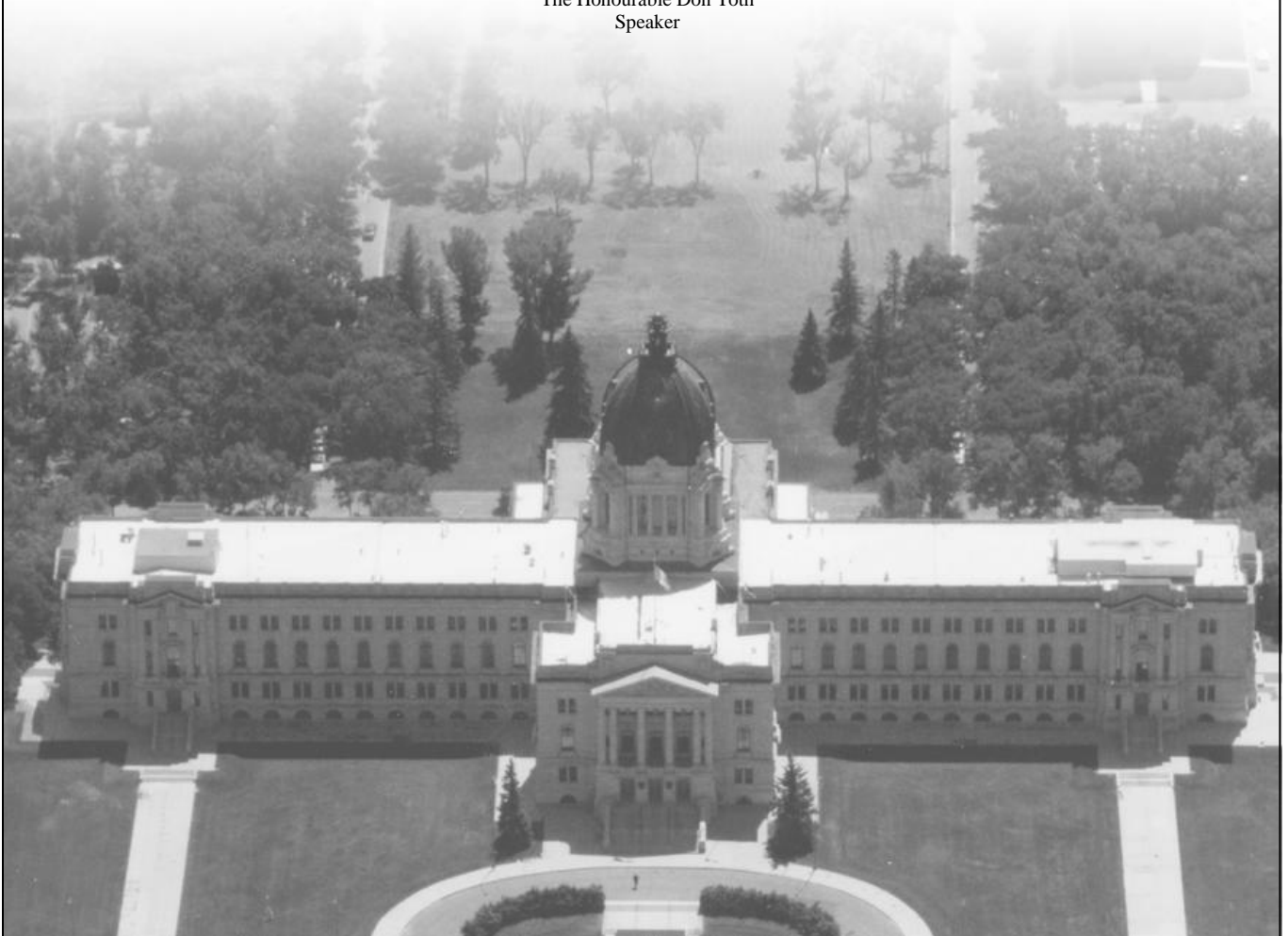
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 54 bright-eyed students from the Father Robinson School in Saskatoon.

Father Robinson School is in the heart of the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency. It's the largest Catholic school in Saskatoon with some 630 students. Now I'm told that they're a very well-behaved bunch, Mr. Speaker, but I don't know by the list of their chaperones here . . . but I think they just had some chaperones that wanted to come to the legislature as well.

Supervising the students are teachers Cheryl Green and Ann Waugh, both contributors in Saskatoon in many, many ways. Ann and her husband, Kevin Waugh, do so many things for the community, as well as Cheryl Green.

We want to welcome also chaperones Theresa Stadnyk, Monica Thiessen, Rick Libner, Cathy Wyszomirski, Renee Tuttle, Lila Williams, Brenda Steinke, Corrie Martens, Elsa Belyk, Courtney Waugh, Dwayne Palchewich, Shelley Rissling, Susan Bristow, Lea Hause, Shauna Kachur, Karen Popoff, Heath Muggli. And we don't have the name of the bus driver on the list, but I'm sure that . . . I know he got you here safe, and he or she will get you home well.

We as members of the legislature are so pleased when students can come. I know that the students have questions that they are going to put to the Premier and myself a little bit later today. And we sure, we sure appreciate the questions. They'll have an opportunity to hear some of the questions that the opposition put forward, and I know yours will be as good, if not better. I'd ask all members to welcome the group of students from Father Robinson School in Saskatoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. All hon. members in this Assembly will have noted that the participants in the Saskatchewan House of Prayer have been dropping by on a very regular basis and been seated in your gallery today. There are two from the constituency of Swift Current that I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. We had the opportunity to briefly say hello earlier this day.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce Bonnie Johnston and Maureen Quincy from Swift Current, from southwest Saskatchewan. And I would ask all members to

welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members, I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Kevin Fenwick, our Provincial Ombudsman, sitting in the Speaker's gallery. I'd like to extend a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure I rise to present a petition on behalf of Moose Jaw residents. And the petition deals with the expansion, the proposed expansion to Moose Jaw Union Hospital. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to provide the funding for the expansion and renovation of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand and present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents dealing with Bills 5 and 6, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the new government to withdraw both Bills and hold broad public consultations about labour relations in the province.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the people from the communities of Saskatoon, Regina, and various other communities across Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition that reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that our Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens that have signed this petition live on Avenue E, Avenue H, 8th Avenue, St. Paul's Place, Spadina

Crescent, Avenue B South, 20th Street, Avenue E, Avenue H, Clarence, Molloy Street, 22nd Street, Avenue U, Avenue Q, and Avenue F and Avenue K. All people that live in that area, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Recognizing Administrative Professionals

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Administrative Professionals Day, a day set aside to express our gratitude for the hard work and invaluable contributions that administrative professionals provide on a daily basis. Mr. Speaker, behind every successful office, there's an efficient and dedicated staff of administrative support in support of us.

In today's high-speed, demanding, and technical world, the role of the administrative professional is ever-changing and becoming increasingly dynamic. Mr. Speaker, whether the individual is caring for a sick child while they find a parent or guardian to pick up the child from school or child care; whether the individual is juggling a calendar to book appointments for a cancer patient, with our constituents, or with a client; or simply accepting calls from a working mom who calls and asks for her child to be notified that she should go to the child care program because a conflict has come up and neither parent can pick her up from school, all of these individuals are such an important facet of our everyday lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would personally like to thank Margaret, Jannet, Val, and Gail from our caucus office, the NDP caucus office; Sherry and Nathan from the Regina Walsh Acres constituency office; and Marcia from St. Mary's School.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of my colleagues I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and all of the administrative professionals throughout the province and in our constituency offices and in our caucus offices, and commend them for their tireless efforts and commitment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the House in recognition of the Administrative Professionals Week and all those who work in our caucus and our party offices, as well as in constituency offices across the province. I know I'm speaking for the entire caucus when I say we're able to perform our duties only thanks to the hard work that Marianne Hoffart, Linda Holzer, Brooklyn Elhard do each and every day, even when we're not in session. Erin Brehm also does a tremendous job at the party headquarters.

Mr. Speaker, these four women provide professional, efficient, and timely assistance that goes well beyond what is required. They are the detail people, Mr. Speaker, and the work they do all too often goes unrecognized. They take care of the little

things that are critical as we go about our duties.

MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] are not the only ones who benefit from their help. All the employees in our caucus and party offices do. I plan on making it a point to call my constituency office today so I can thank my constituency assistant. These individuals provide a vital link with our constituents. While we can't be in our offices every day, our CAs [constituency assistant] are, and they act as our eyes and ears at home. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Moose Jaw High School Drama Festival

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, A.E. Peacock Collegiate was centre stage for the Moose Jaw High School Drama Festival recently. Four Moose Jaw schools participated in the festival: Vanier Collegiate, Central Collegiate, Peacock Collegiate, and Cornerstone Christian School. Also in attendance for the festival were Assiniboia Composite High and Central Butte School.

The event was a great success, and all the schools did an excellent job with more than 25 awards being handed out throughout the festival. Vanier Collegiate took several awards. The school performed the comedy *15 Reasons Not to Put on a Play*, which took best overall play. The school will be performing the play at the provincial championship that will be held in May at the University of Regina.

Central Collegiate presented the play *Making Nice*, and Peacock performed *Juvie*, with both productions claiming a number of awards.

Karrie Ritchie said in her four years as a coordinator, this was the very best festival. With well-prepared casts and crews, Ritchie was grateful for the students who made the festival one to remember.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in recognizing these talented students involved in these productions and the supporting staff and volunteers that helped make this festival possible. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

2008 Premier's Dinner

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night business leaders and residents of Regina attended the 2008 Premier's dinner here in Regina. Mr. Speaker, the dinner was a huge success, being sold out three weeks ago and being attended by over 1,600 people.

Mr. Speaker, it started off with the Premier being introduced by one of Saskatchewan's greatest broadcasters, Pamela Wallin,

who as we all know is a true champion of Saskatchewan and went on to serve as the Canadian Consul General to New York.

Mr. Speaker, every person who attended the dinner came away inspired and determined to work together to help Saskatchewan continue to grow. Mr. Speaker, the Premier outlined his vision for Saskatchewan and how the rest of Canada is talking about Saskatchewan and the province. Mr. Speaker, the Premier also talked about the Saskatchewan Party government's achievements since taking office a few short months ago and how our government is showing true leadership, and how we are ready for growth.

Mr. Speaker, I have been able to attend many dinners and hear many speeches given by very influential people, but last night, Mr. Speaker, was something truly special for me and those who attended, and will go down as one of the most successful events held and hosted by Saskatchewan's Premier. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Crocus Co-op Celebrates Anniversary

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, Crocus Co-op in Saskatoon celebrated its 25th anniversary by hosting a very special luncheon. My colleagues from Riversdale and Meewasin and I were able to take part in the celebrations. Members, friends, and supporters recall the journey Crocus has taken over the past 25 years. One special speaker, Dianne Billings, the first female president, talked fondly of the challenges Crocus overcame to be what it is today.

Crocus Co-op, a non-profit, charitable, member-guided organization, works on behalf of people recovering from mental illness by promoting their rights and responsibilities; providing a safe, accepting, drop-in environment; and promoting members' growth through vocational, educational, recreational, and social programs.

Crocus is a place where staff and members can work and play together in a non-judgmental environment. It's a place where members can find companionship, understanding, and support. It's a place to learn, work, and heal.

The transitional work program is the real heart of the rehabilitation strategy at Crocus. Suitable employment tops the unmet needs of the membership, putting real money into their pockets, and it brings the dignity of earning your own way.

Crocus is proud to have served our community for the past 25 years and looks forward to continuing to be an important link in helping to banish the stigma associated with mental health and to provide help to successfully recover from mental illness. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Crocus Co-op on their 25th anniversary. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Dress For Success Suit Drive

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that tomorrow afternoon the Government of Saskatchewan is hosting a suit drive to benefit Dress for Success Regina. Between 11:30 and 2 in the first floor rotunda, volunteers from our government and Dress for Success Regina will be collecting clothing and financial donations for this organization.

This incredible organization is quite new to our city, Mr. Speaker, and aims to promote the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support, and the career development tools to help women in our city thrive in work and in life.

Mr. Speaker, upon a confirmed job interview, clients are referred to Dress for Success Regina through a variety of referral agencies. They are invited to the boutique and are suited for this interview by a trained volunteer who also provides the woman with encouragement that in turns raises her confidence and self-esteem. After the client secures employment, she's invited back to the boutique for an employment suiting which includes a week's worth of clothing and accessories.

We only get one first impression, Mr. Speaker. While clothing cannot make the woman, it really can provide her with the confidence to make that impression a good one, regardless of her economic situation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all the employees of this building to donate clothing to Dress for Success Regina in the next couple of hours, and I'd like to thank you all for support of this worthy cause.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

[13:45]

Disposal of Records

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier has made a lot of interesting statements in the last weeks, but the one I find most interesting is where he claims that the Sask Party didn't leave anything behind when they moved out.

Actually in my very office there's a vault in the wall, and when I moved into my office, there was a lot of stuff left behind. There were old VCRs [videocassette recorder], tape players, a video camera, and other electronic equipment. There were news releases and files on anything from GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] to Fishing Lake, from 16 years ago to one year ago. And there was a sign left on the door by members across the way saying, quote, "hidden agenda vault, established 1997." You can't make this stuff up, Mr. Speaker.

Another interesting thing is that Monday the Justice minister told police that the Sask Party takes personal correspondence and casework very, very seriously, but not so seriously that they didn't leave a few boxes of it behind. We found this personal, private information in the hidden agenda vault, and we did the

right thing. We turned it over to the Privacy Commissioner, and he wrote back to us saying that we needed to shred it or turn it over to the MLAs across the way.

So to the Sask Party: we have your files; come and get them. And the Privacy Commissioner says to give them to an MLA. I'm pretty busy with House duties and committee work, but I have some spare office hours between 2:30 and 3:30 today, and that's room 140. Come and get your files.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Measures to Assist Low-Income Workers

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, last night while the Premier and his MLAs were out at a \$225-a-plate dinner, the people of our province were at home wondering why the mean-spirited government cut for a program for low-income workers. Yesterday the Minister of Health said the program was simply too expensive.

Well we've seen those members opposite give \$60,000 increase to Ken Love, a \$20,000 increase to Mr. Eberle, \$50,000 to Kevin Wilson, and \$75,000 to Doug Emsley. While a health benefit program to low-income workers is a little too rich for the minister, he apparently has no problem spending more than that to pad the pockets of Sask Party friends.

So to the Premier: how does he defend this double standard — big bonuses for Sask Party friends and staff, and no health care benefits for low-income working people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Saskatchewan Party government has done what it always said it would do, and that is to share the prosperity of our province with all of the people of Saskatchewan.

In our budget, Mr. Speaker, we have 500,000 for school lunch and anti-hunger programs in the community schools. In our budget, Mr. Speaker, we have the largest increase ever to low-income families to help them raise their children. Mr. Speaker, in our budget is \$5 million for CBOs [community-based organization] for life skills and job trainings.

In our budget there, we just dedicated last week \$440,000 for the food bank to help with the cull program with the hogs. We have 1 million additional dollars for transitional houses and sexual abuse centres. Mr. Speaker, we have a refundable tax benefit of up to \$150 per year for children aged 6 to 14, registered in cultural, recreational, or sports programs. Mr. Speaker, I hope they have another question because this list

goes on and on of the good things in our budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — When the Health minister was asked why he axed the program, he responded that low-income working people should simply get a higher-paying job. I'll remind the members opposite that the vulnerable workers report found that 90,000 Saskatchewan residents earn less than \$10 an hour or less than \$20,000 a year.

So to the Premier: does he really think that his government's only responsibility is to tell low-income working people to get a better job, or does he think that the Minister of Health might, just might, have some responsibility to ensure that Saskatchewan's most vulnerable workers, i.e., low-income working people, should have access to some health benefits?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very glad to yet again be able to answer the member's question by going through the number of great things in our budget that helps working people and lower-income people.

We added 500 additional new daycare spaces for the price of \$33.8 million. We doubled, Mr. Speaker, the tax credits for families. We doubled the tax credit for families taking care of the disabled. We added 7.5 million . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a long list of all the initiatives in our budget that will help families and low-income people in our province. We added 7.5 million for early childhood development and KidsFirst programs. We added 38 new pre-K [pre-kindergarten] locations across the province.

Mr. Speaker, my own Ministry of Social Services added additional funding for Egadz for youth, vulnerable youth in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, we have a 15 per cent increase for foster care rates in our province. Mr. Speaker, I hope there's another question, because I could just continue on and on and on.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Health was asked by reporters whether any due diligence was done to ensure that health benefits are available for low-income working people, the minister replied and I quote, "I haven't

done that work, no.” Well good to see that the government cuts first and then asks questions later.

Now anti-poverty advocates say they know many people who would benefit from this program. And Peter Gilmer from the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry called the program’s cancellation a step backwards.

To the Premier: is his advice still simply to get a better job or can they at least consider . . .

The Speaker: — The member may place her question.

Ms. Atkinson: — So to the Premier: is his government’s advice simply still for low-income working people to get a better job, or can they do some due diligence and reinstate the program?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder when the NDP [New Democratic Party] were in government, what was their advice. Let me see. On their 1991 NDP election promise was to eliminate the need for food banks in Saskatchewan. They had 16 years to do that, Mr. Speaker. The NDP had 16 years to do that and what happened? We have, at the end of 16 years, have the highest number of people using food banks.

Mr. Speaker, also they said that they would work to end child poverty. What did they do in 16 years, Mr. Speaker? Well we lead the nation in child poverty. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot to do as a new government and we intend to do it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — So let’s recap, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that’s sitting on \$1.3 billion in cash. This is a government that shows such contempt for working people and low-income people that they do a couple of things. They axe Station 20. They do in the dental sealant program for low-income kids in inner city neighbourhoods in Saskatoon and Regina. And now they cancel a health benefit for very low-income working people, Mr. Speaker. This really does tell the public what this Sask Party government is prepared to do when it comes to mean-spirited cuts, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask the member once again: can she at least consider re-implementing this health benefit for very low-income working people? And as we know, there are many businesses in this province that cannot afford these types of health benefits, and they need to attract workers. Can she at least consider re-implementing this health benefit?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was a gentleman who once said that it is a sad truth that only blocks from the marble steps of this legislature, only blocks from the marble steps of this legislature it is the sad truth that children in this city go to school hungry. And that’s a disgrace, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is well known in this House and across the province that the growth industry in Saskatchewan in this decade has been the food banks.

And you know who said that, Mr. Speaker? Well it is the Leader of the NDP, and they had 16 years to address this problem. And, Mr. Speaker, what does the Saskatchewan Party do in their very first budget only months after the election? We added money for the school lunch and anti-hunger program.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Water Quality

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a recent report in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* indicates that Saskatchewan has among the most boil-water advisories of any province or territory in the country. According to the report, Saskatchewan ranks fourth with 126 advisories as of March 21. By comparison, Mr. Speaker, Alberta had 13 such advisories, and Manitoba only 59. Of the boil-water advisories in our province, 53 are considered emergency advisories. This means that a threat to human health has been conclusively identified in the water source.

My question is to the minister: with \$1 billion in the bank, the Sask Party government is in a strong position to act on this issue. What will the minister do to address water quality in our province? What is her plan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question, and I would point out that I’m pretty sure that not every one of these water advisories came down in the last five months. I would imagine that some of these came down while the NDP was in power as well.

But as for water in this province, Mr. Speaker, obviously it’s a priority for this government to ensure that we have a quality water supply for people of this province and to promote conservation as well. And we look forward to, after signing the agreement with the federal government on infrastructure, money coming into this province, that where there are improvements that need to be made, those can be made through that funding, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I will remind that minister that many of the boil-water advisories are in rural Saskatchewan, so if she's really a friend of the rural Saskatchewan she claims to be, perhaps she could also answer the question. José Miville-Dechéne . . .

The Speaker: — I'd ask members to allow the member to place her question. Member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, José Miville-Dechéne, the editor of *The Water Chronicles*, an independent water monitoring organization, has warned that, quote, "Everybody in Canada seems to think [that] we don't have issues with water, and we do, and they're growing."

Mr. Speaker, our province has among the most boil-water advisories in the country, and she has no plan. My question is to the minister. Will the minister commit today to doing the necessary consultations to developing a plan to substantively address the very serious issue of water quality here in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out to the member opposite, if she went through our budget, which was released not so very long ago, that she would see a \$6 million investment in new dollars for water development in southwest Saskatchewan.

The Premier and I attended the Council of the Federation in January in Vancouver and are committed to a water strategy for not just this province but for . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the Premier and I were at the Council of the Federation meetings in Vancouver in January and are committed to a national water strategy, working with other premiers and provinces across the country. And there is currently a development committee that has drafted a Canada-wide strategy for managing water across Canada, and we look forward to the outcome of that report.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[14:00]

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, for a government that claims it's moving forward, that minister sure spends a lot of time looking

back.

Our province has among the most difficulties with water quality of any jurisdiction in Canada. Climate change and the development of oil sands will exacerbate the problem, and how does the minister respond? She cut all but 40 of the \$320 million set aside for climate change initiatives, eliminated the Office of Energy Conservation, and disbanded the climate change secretariat. She's failed to address the acidification of water sources in the North, and now we see that she has absolutely no plan to deal with water quality, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister. Will the minister come clean with the people of Saskatchewan and admit that she is no more interested in addressing water quality than she is in addressing climate change?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for her question, for bringing up climate change. I know the opposition likes to use the phrase stunningly incompetent, and I think they use the phrase because they're intimately familiar with it.

We know that the NDP had absolutely no plan for industry or SaskPower on climate change when they were in government, and they are apparently incredibly confused when they're in opposition. Mr. Speaker, the Environment critic said Tuesday during a scrum that, quote, "intensity-based targets do nothing in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions." But then she went on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "I would say the federal targets are something that they [meaning us] should clearly be adopting."

I would point out to the Environment critic for the opposition that the federal regulations are intensity-based, the very thing that she argued against. And, Mr. Speaker, I would also point out to the member opposite that the targets for the federal regulations are 20 per cent over . . . a reduction by 2020. The targets that they themselves adopted are 32 per cent. Is she now abdicating her party's position?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Investment Strategy

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Increasingly Saskatchewan people are worried about their Crown corporations. Their concerns follow recent comments made by the Minister Responsible for the Crown Corporations. Last week the minister said that the Sask Party would be interfering in the operations of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and placing a moratorium on all further out-of-province investment. He also said that party would be reviewing all

Crown investments outside of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Navigata is a SaskTel Crown asset that the Sask Party has used a whipping boy for years. My question to the minister: will the Sask Party be selling all or part of Navigata?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a reminder for the member opposite and for all members of the legislature that we are the party that keeps our promises. On November 7 and throughout the election campaign, we said to the people of Saskatchewan that Saskatchewan's Crowns will remain under public ownership, and that's what we intend to do. That's where they will stay, Mr. Speaker.

To specifically address the member's question, today we talked in the release of the SaskTel annual report about an audit that this government will be undertaking to audit all out-of-province investments. It's something that is necessary. It's something that would be done in the private sector. And it's something that's incumbent upon a responsible government to do in light of the situation in the Crowns today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's another rumour in Saskatchewan, and it involves Saskferco. To the minister: will the minister confirm that his government has engaged the services of CIBC Wood Gundy to sell the government's Saskferco assets?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — To be clear — and I thank the member for his question, Mr. Speaker — to be clear, this is an investment, a government investment, not a wholly owned Crown corporation. The province holds an interest in Saskferco with a substantial business partner. The government's interest is a minority interest. And we have not only some commercial interests to protect in the comments we make, but we are also subject to the majority shareholder's wishes on this matter. So if they have an interest in selling Saskferco, that may happen at some point. Thank you for the question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, like a leopard, the Sask Party, it hasn't taken them very long to show their true conservative spots. The members opposite did a lot of talking before the election about how they wouldn't privatize Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. But they conveniently forgot to mention that some Crowns are more Crown than others. After only five months in government, Mr. Speaker, three of our province's Crown assets are clearly on the chopping . . .

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After only five months in government, three of our province's Crown assets are clearly on the chopping block.

My question is to the Minister Responsible for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. What other Crowns, Crowns that belong to the people of Saskatchewan, are on the Sask Party's chopping block? What's next?

The Speaker: — I recognized the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — I thank the member for that question as well, Mr. Speaker. And certainly during the reign of the previous NDP government some Crowns were a lot more Crown than others. And here's three that were a lot less Crown apparently.

The Husky shares that that former government possessed and were sold — and were sold, Mr. Speaker. The Cameco shares that that government sold, and I think they made a good deal on those Cameco shares, Mr. Speaker. But they did, but they did, Mr. Speaker, sell them. And most recently and just before the last election in 2007, Mr. Speaker, they sold their government shares in the NewGrade upgrader here in Regina. Clearly some Crowns under that administration were more Crown than others.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Accountability and Transparency

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, before the election, the members opposite claimed they would come to government and make government more transparent and more accountable. Now they have just tabled in this House, legislation that does, Mr. Speaker, just the opposite.

Up until now, Mr. Speaker, all expenditures made by the Premier and cabinet, over \$50,000, required an order in council. That order in council made the expenditure public in a matter of days. This week they introduced Bill 31 which will change that provision, Mr. Speaker, which will allow the Premier and the cabinet to spend up to \$350,000, Mr. Speaker, without an order in council, without public exposure of the expenditure, for at least a year.

I ask the Premier: how can this change that he has proposed be described as improving accountability and transparency?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. I think it's fair to say that The Growth and Financial Security Act that this government introduced in December, and that will pass this spring, makes great strides towards increasing the accountability and the transparency of the government. It strengthens the balanced budget legislation of the province of Saskatchewan. And moreover every single decision that this government makes either in council or in the Legislative Assembly is subject to and open to scrutiny of Saskatchewan people.

We will be accountable for decisions that are made on this side of the House, in the cabinet. We'll be accountable for legislation that is passed, Mr. Speaker. And that has not always been the case. And if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to discuss it further, I'd be more than happy to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, they promised to be more accountable and transparent. Part of their commitment was to place all OCs, all order in councils, online so that the public could see them. Now what they've failed to mention to the people of Saskatchewan was they were prepared to jack up by seven times the amount of money this Premier and this cabinet can spend without reporting it publicly, until such time as it may appear in the public accounts.

How, Mr. Speaker, can, how can the Premier defend that commitment made to the people of Saskatchewan with this legislation that's now before the House? It is clearly breaking his commitment to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the scope and scale of government activities obviously, since the original OC levels in terms of expenditures were set, has changed. We also want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that government can react, that ministers can react to situations as they arise.

But this notion, this notion that any tax dollars would be spent, notwithstanding whether they're decisions made in council or not, is ridiculous because it will be accountability through public accounts. There is accountability through estimates. There is accountability through the media. Obviously the government will be indicating when investments are made.

We will be forthright with the people of this province. Those

orders in council will be posted online, Mr. Speaker, for all to see. What we will not have in this province under this government is the spectre of a six-year cover-up, the likes we saw of SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], from those members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Government of Manitoba requires that every expenditure made by cabinet and the Premier over \$50,000 have an OC. The Government of Alberta places no limit; every expenditure made by the Premier and cabinet is reported publicly immediately. The Government of Canada, Mr. Speaker, insists that all contracts over \$10,000 be made public. This Premier and this cabinet now want the ability to spend \$350,000 and not have it reported immediately to the public, to the opposition, or the media.

I say again to the Premier: why does he want this change? Why has he put this change before the legislature? And does this change not distinctly break a promise that he made to the people of Saskatchewan that they would be an open and accountable government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have noted of late from other provinces like Manitoba, for example, who I think this day are following our example of the half million dollar investment with respect to the culled pork, the culled sow program. Manitoba's following suit with respect to the Government of Saskatchewan's initiative. We notice that Alberta now's talking about the new West and introduced their own *Ready for Growth* budget. I think it was yesterday in Alberta.

I'd expect, Mr. Speaker, that other provinces will want to look at the way things, the way business is done, the way decisions are made. They may well follow the example of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And I don't know, but they may well follow our example in this regard as well.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this, that the decisions that we take, that the expenditures we make are going to be accountable. They're a part of public accounts. They're a part of the day-to-day accounting that this government has been making and will continue to make. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to provide proactive government that reacts to situations as they happen. It will be responsible and accountable, markedly different than what we saw from the NDP for 16 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen this government in action. Cuts to the vulnerable in the inner cities, cuts to children, cuts to vulnerable workers, meanwhile giving their friends cushy jobs and pay increases. Mr. Speaker, if this provision now before the legislature had been in place, we might very well never have known about the salary increases they've given to their political staff. We would've never known about the \$60,000 salary increase they've given to their hand-picked appointee, Mr. Ken Love of the Labour Relations Board.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of change is intolerable to Saskatchewan people. It is the fundamental breaking of an election promise. It is anything but accountable. It is a massive step backwards in accountability. Mr. Speaker, I say again to the Premier: will he simply admit this is a mistake? Will he withdraw this piece of legislation, even before it receives second reading?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think increasingly there is anecdotal and empirical evidence of the people of the province of Saskatchewan responding to the new government. I know not very long ago there was a public opinion poll published in a daily newspaper that indicated that the people of the province seemed to be pleased with, certainly approving the progress that this government is making to date.

That is true of the anecdotal evidence we see including the kinds of interest we have in Saskatchewan Party events right across this province. And maybe the reason, Mr. Speaker, is precisely because this government already has been more accountable than that party ever was when they sat here.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Maybe it's because in only five months 60 promises have been kept by this government, 40 in the budget alone, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's because the people of this province welcome the fact that they now have a government that does exactly . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — When members are prepared to come to order, we will proceed. Before orders of the day . . . Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Government Services. What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order, all members in the House are assumed to be honourable and to be treated as such. During question period, Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina Walsh Acres, after her last question, from her seat accused the Minister of the Environment of lying. She directed her words and quote, "Thanks for lying" to the minister and I clearly heard those twice, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the member for Regina Walsh Acres rise in her place, withdraw those offensive remarks, and unequivocally apologize.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to withdraw those remarks and extend my apologies.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — I thank the member from Regina Walsh Acres. Before orders of the day, I would like to lay on the table the report of the Provincial Ombudsman for 2007.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Appropriateness of Ministerial Statement

The Speaker: — As well I'd like to give a statement. Before orders of the day, I wish to address a concern regarding the appropriateness of statements made by the Minister of the Environment during yesterday's proceedings.

The minister's comments outlined a number of initiatives undertaken by the government in the environmental field and noted that April 22 was marked around the world as Earth Day. The comments were made during the period reserved for ministerial statements.

In reviewing the statement made by the minister, I find that it did not announce any new policy, initiatives, or programs as required by the practices of this Assembly. Instead the initiatives identified had been previously announced either during the Speech from the Throne, the presentation of the budget, or in a separate event.

I remind members of my statement of December 19 in which I outlined the Assembly's practice regarding statements by individual members and by ministers. At that time, the period set aside for ministerial statements was described as an opportunity for ministers to advise the Assembly of matters relating to government policy, ministerial action, and to announce a new direction or program. Ministers are not permitted to use this period to comment on matters that have previously been announced or to make congratulatory messages.

Members will appreciate the difficulty faced by the Speaker in determining the appropriateness of a ministerial statement as it is being delivered. Often it is only once a statement is well

under way or has been completed that I may identify whether or not a new policy or direction has been announced. Compounding the difficulty of the Speaker is the need to ensure fairness to the opposition by affording their representative an equal opportunity to respond.

In reviewing the record, I find that the Environment minister's statement did not meet the requirements for a ministerial statement. It could, however, have been made by seeking leave prior to orders of the day. In the future I have cautioned ministers to ensure that they choose the appropriate time to deliver their statements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 34 — The Graduate Retention Program Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to have the opportunity to move second reading of Bill 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act. The Act will provide authority for the introduction of the graduate retention program.

Mr. Speaker, around the world and across Canada people are increasingly sensing the change in Saskatchewan. Once again our province is seen increasingly as a land of opportunity, a place where each new day brings with it a renewed sense of confidence, of sustaining prosperity, of sharing the benefits of this prosperity with the peoples of our province, and learning lessons from other jurisdictions about fostering this growth and channelling it. *The Globe and Mail* recently reported that Saskatchewan is the new it province. And the government is working to sustain this growth for the benefit of our people.

To capitalize on our economic buoyancy, we need to retain and attract more people with skills and education to help meet our current and future labour market shortages, to grow our economy, and help to ensure that our communities are increasingly dynamic and diverse. We must work hard to meet our talent challenge in a more substantive way.

As part of our 2007 election campaign, we promised to launch the most aggressive youth retention plan in Canada. And today we take another step forward in keeping this important promise. Further, as part of our '08-09 provincial budget, our government announced the graduate retention program, which will rebate the tuition of certificate, diploma, three- and four-year undergraduate post-secondary degrees, and journeypersons who graduated from a Saskatchewan post-secondary institution and who stay in the province for seven years after graduation.

Eligible graduates will also include those from out-of-province health education programs where the Government of Saskatchewan has purchased seats and who move back to

Saskatchewan. Some of these approved programs include optometry at the University of Waterloo, sonography at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, respiratory therapy at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and nuclear medicine at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

The graduate retention program is the most aggressive youth retention program in the country, Mr. Speaker, rebating up to \$20,000 per post-secondary graduate. We estimate that approximately 9,000 graduates per year will receive a graduate retention program certificate. That is 9,000 graduates per year with the incentive and financial footing to help invest both professionally and personally right here in Saskatchewan.

The program also creates a tremendous value-added proposition for our post-secondary institutions, Mr. Speaker, as they work and need to continue their work diligently and creatively and ideally co-operatively to help recruit students from outside the province.

The careers are here, Mr. Speaker. The lifestyle is here. The quality of life is here. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is where it's at. Again, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act as yet another promise kept.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour has moved second reading of Bill No. 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 34 essentially replaces the graduate tax exemption put forward by the previous administration. Now the graduate tax exemption was widely available to all graduates. It was easy to understand by those graduates. And it was available both to graduates inside and outside the province. Additionally, the benefits for the program were essentially universal regardless of the program which you graduated from.

Several constituents have written to me and called my office lamenting the changes to these programs. Obviously they're wondering why they have decreased funding available to them as an incentive to stay in the province due to the introduction of Bill 34.

Now this plan does not include exemptions or incentives for graduate students, which I find strange. These are the most highly trained, specialized graduates in our province, and yet we don't seem to want to incent them to stay. It doesn't make any sense. Additionally 99 per cent of graduates from outside our province will not be eligible. That's not a way to attract a workforce to our province and especially a generally young workforce.

This new legislation heavily favours university students over trades and tech school grads, which flies in the face directly of the labour shortages that we currently have in our province. If you look at where the shortages are in labour, they're most

high, most intense in tech grads and trade schools graduates. So it doesn't make any sense that you would punish those folks and not incent them to stay.

On top of all this, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in their policy addressing affordability and accessibility in any of these programs, which is an upfront measure to ensure that people are enabled to attend university in order to graduate from these programs.

So with these items, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Somebody say no? I think I heard a no. All those in favour, say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed? The motion carries.

Why is the member from Saskatchewan Rivers on her feet?

Ms. Wilson: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatchewan Rivers has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Wilson: — Seated in the west gallery are three gentlemen from my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers. We're going to meet later with the member and the minister of Kindersley. Their names are Ken Hodgson, Neil Otte, and Tom Plishka. So I'd like you to welcome them to the Assembly please. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 31 — The Executive Government Administration Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to move second reading of The Executive Government Administration Act. One of the principal purposes of this legislation is to bring together into one statute the provisions which relate to the executive government of the province. To that end The Government Organization Act and the Executive Council provisions of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007 are being consolidated and the duplicate provisions are being removed.

The second principle guiding this legislation is based upon updating process and ensuring a consistent application of policy as it relates to the administration of the executive government. To that end, this Bill amends those provisions around the appointment of legislative secretaries by removing the

unnecessary step of reappointment at the end of each calendar year. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we are codifying the practice of incumbents in these positions serving either with or without remuneration.

The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991 will be repealed and the provisions of this Act have been incorporated into the new legislation. This amendment will place in one statute the responsibility that members of the Executive Council must fulfill in not only tabling annual reports, but in tabling the numerous other documents which are required by statute in a timely and transparent fashion.

This legislation amends provisions concerning how advisory committees are established. Under the current provisions of The Government Organization Act, ministers have the ability to establish advisory committees if the work of the committee will be completed in less than a year, and cabinet appoints advisory committees if the committee is for a year or more. The proposed amendment will require that all advisory committees are appointed by cabinet to ensure proper control in a potential growth of these types of committees.

Amendments are being advanced in this Bill which will see an adjustment to the thresholds related to grants and financial assistance measures. In relationship to grants, the provision to require an order in council for a grant has been removed. This provides greater flexibilities for managers within ministries in dealing with stakeholders.

This is the same for raising the threshold for an order in council from \$50,000 to \$350,000 as it relates to financial assistance. Hon. members will also notice that in the consequential amendments contained in the Bill that other figures of \$150,000 and \$250,000 are also used. These figures are specific to the statute in question and in one case provides continuity throughout the statute.

Mr. Speaker, while these are major modifications to the administration of government, I want to assure the members that the internal mechanisms of oversight and monitoring undertaken by Treasury Board and other offices, including this House, remain intact. Indeed the legislation provides the ability for the minister to set any terms and conditions on the grant or financial assistance provided. And cabinet still retains the ability, as it does today should the need arise, to review and indeed stop a measure if it is no longer in the public interest.

The only item that is being removed is the need to generate an order in council.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, The Federal-Provincial Agreements Act is being repealed, and the provisions are being incorporated into this legislation as part IV. Through this action, all of the general overarching provisions related to agreements will be contained in one statute.

Section 9.2 of The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Act related to international aid is being incorporated into this legislation as well. This provision was moved in the reforms of 1983 from the then Department of

Intergovernmental Affairs. This amendment brings the provisions under the auspices of Executive Council and supports its central function in all matters involving relationships with other governments.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to turn to a couple of other major areas as it relates to the consequential amendments contained in this legislation.

This legislation concludes the removal from statute of individual ministerial Acts. Provisions which are duplicate to The Executive Government Administration Act, except in the areas of agriculture and health, will be repealed. Those provisions which are unique to specific ministries have been retained.

In The Department of Urban Affairs Act, The Department of Rural Development Act, The Northern Affairs Act, and The Rural Development Act, these provisions have been combined to create the communities development Act. The purpose behind this consolidation, Mr. Speaker, is that many provisions were identical or dependent upon each other in support of programs administered by these former departments, and now administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. It was felt that these provisions should be consolidated into one statute in order to remove that duplication.

The Financial Administration Act is amended to disestablish the Investment Board and flow these powers to Treasury Board. Hon. members will note that amendments have been proposed in relation to Treasury Board. These amendments provide greater flexibility in the membership of the board and respond to the provisions of section V of the Act, thereby always ensuring that the Minister of Finance is always present during the deliberations of this cabinet committee.

The remaining amendments provide administrative clarity and/or name changes as a result of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to move second reading of the government administration Act.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved second reading of Bill No. 31, The Executive Government Administration Act. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this afternoon to enter into debate on this very important piece of legislation. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more important to the people of Saskatchewan than accountability from their elected representatives. And, Mr. Speaker, we all owe a debt of accountability to those who elect us, and we have a responsibility to be transparent in all that we do.

Mr. Speaker, we see in this piece of legislation a change that fundamentally decreases the ability of the opposition to hold the government accountable, and that in turn, Mr. Speaker, does not allow the public to understand necessarily what the government is doing as they make decisions.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a threshold that every decision that spend money over \$50,000 had to be approved by cabinet. And

thus was approved by an order in council which was published publicly so that the opposition could get it, the media could get it. And in fact then through that process, Mr. Speaker, the general public became aware of how the government was operating their business.

We see today an amendment in this piece of legislation to move that to \$350,000, Mr. Speaker, seven times the current amount, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what does that do, what does that do practically? What it does, Mr. Speaker, is it delays the ability of the opposition and the media and those that are interested to become knowledgeable about what the government is doing for up to a year, Mr. Speaker, for up to a year, when we'd see it printed in the records of the last year, Mr. Speaker.

So how can the government then do, or pardon me, how can the opposition then do its job properly in holding the government accountable for decisions? How can they challenge the decisions of government? How can the people of Saskatchewan know what their government is doing, as they're doing it, Mr. Speaker? The process though, was in place, was reasonable. Any decision or expenditure over \$50,000 went to the cabinet, Mr. Speaker, and was passed through an order in council. Now, \$350,000, Mr. Speaker.

Let's review what other provinces are doing. Because I think that's very, very important as you try to put this particular change in context, Mr. Speaker. Let's start with the federal government, Mr. Speaker. When the federal government came into power — the new federal government in Ottawa, the Stephen Harper Conservative government, in their accountability Act — they put in place that every expenditure over \$10,000, Mr. Speaker, every expenditure over \$10,000 would be immediately reported, Mr. Speaker, so that the opposition could in fact hold the government accountable through that, so the media and the public became aware of those expenditures, Mr. Speaker. That's what the federal government did in order to try to make their accountability stronger, Mr. Speaker — much different than the direction taken by the government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about what happens in the province to the west of us now in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in Alberta every expenditure over \$1 is made public immediately, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Speaker, every expenditure over \$1. That's what the Government of Alberta to the west of us does, Mr. Speaker.

And what does the province to east of us do, Manitoba, Mr. Speaker? They have the same threshold we previously had or we have today, before the members opposite are proposing the change that they're making, Mr. Speaker. Every expenditure at \$50,000 or above had to be reported through an order in council, making it the knowledge of both the opposition, the general public, and the media, Mr. Speaker, thereby allowing those individuals to challenge a particular expenditure, to make the government rethink an action that they're planning, Mr. Speaker. But you had the ability to do something when it's in the stage that you may be able to change something or make a difference, Mr. Speaker.

If you move that level to \$350,000, many, many sizeable contracts will never be brought before this Assembly or be able to be spoke of by members on this side of the House because

we won't be made aware of them for a considerable period of time, Mr. Speaker — contracts that involve payments to individuals, Mr. Speaker; contracts making payments to agencies, Mr. Speaker. All of which should be allowed to be scrutinized by both the opposition and the general public, Mr. Speaker.

So what does this in essence do, Mr. Speaker? It takes away the transparency, the operation of government and allows the government to do things that they don't want us to know. They don't want the opposition to know, and they don't want the general public to know, Mr. Speaker. And at some point in the future, we may find out if we ask the right questions in estimates or ask the right questions during Public Accounts, Mr. Speaker, but there isn't the transparency that allows for the level of accountability that the people of this province both deserve and want, Mr. Speaker.

And why would this government be going in a direction totally opposite of other governments in Canada, Mr. Speaker? As other governments have talked about increasing accountability, Mr. Speaker, they've gone in the opposite direction. They've in fact tightened it up and reported even smaller amounts than \$50,000, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a move in the opposite direction to the trend across this country. And, Mr. Speaker, why is that? What are the members opposite trying to hide from the public? What are they trying to hide from the opposition, Mr. Speaker? Because if they don't have anything to hide, Mr. Speaker, why change it? Why change it? Why would you not want to keep it at a norm that the country would accept, that this province has accepted, and is transparent enough to allow the opposition both to do its job and the media to also scrutinize those expenditures, Mr. Speaker.

We don't see any explanation for it, Mr. Speaker. What we see is a significant change, one that makes it much more difficult if not impossible for the opposition to perform their function, Mr. Speaker, which is a very important function under our parliamentary system. The role of the opposition to hold the government accountable for its actions is fundamental to the role of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And this change is taking away and eroding that responsibility put on the opposition by the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And this erosion of accountability and transparency, Mr. Speaker, is one that will fundamentally, fundamentally hurt the people of the province and the opposition.

And how, how do I believe that's going to happen, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Speaker, today you could give an individual a contract of \$340,000, Mr. Speaker, and we wouldn't become aware of that contract for a year. So that person could get \$340,000, Mr. Speaker, and we have no way of questioning whether people are getting value for their money, Mr. Speaker. We have no way of questioning whether it's an appropriate contract. We have no way of saying . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I am finding it a little difficult to catch the comments of the member from Regina Dewdney. And I'd just ask for members just to lower the level a little bit while you're consulting with other members. The member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, this is about fundamental accountability, Mr. Speaker. And what are they afraid of, Mr. Speaker?

The indications are that the Premier has said that it's too much work to have OCs at \$50,000 levels, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you very clearly and the members opposite that, you know, transparency and accountability does require work. But we, we have a fundamental responsibility to the people of this province to do what's necessary in our jobs to provide that level of accountability for those people, Mr. Speaker.

And what we have today is a government that's lazy. We have a government that says they don't want to do their jobs because it's too difficult. It's too much work, Mr. Speaker. And I think they need to fundamentally rethink this.

They're going in a direction opposite to the norms of Canada, opposite to the norms of other governments in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, where there has been a push across this county for more transparency and more accountability, we have a government in Saskatchewan that's moving in the opposite direction.

And what, and what did the Leader of the Government say, the Premier? He said it's because it's too much work, Mr. Speaker. He says it's too much work. Well, Mr. Speaker, accountability is work, Mr. Speaker. And that is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of any government — to be accountable, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have — as I indicated earlier — the federal government going to \$10,000. We have the province of Alberta reporting anything over \$1, Mr. Speaker. And we have the province of Manitoba at the same level we are today at \$50,000, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental mistake. This is a bad, bad mistake, Mr. Speaker, and this is something that should be reconsidered. It's something should be reconsidered immediately, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan will not agree with this, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite need some time, the members opposite need some time to reconsider this rash, unthought through, this unthought through direction, Mr. Speaker. And we're not even sure the members on the opposite side on the backbench even knew that they were moving in a direction contrary to what the Canadian norms are, Mr. Speaker, or their own platform as well, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think because of the seriousness of this Bill and because the members opposite need some time to reconsider this ill-thought-through move, Mr. Speaker, that at this time, we'd like to adjourn debate to give them time to think about their mistake.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 32 — The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 apportant des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Executive Government Administration Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to move second reading of The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendment Act, 2008. As with the consequential amendments contained in Bill 31, these amendments provide basic wording changes as a result of The Executive Government Administration Act.

I would note for the information of hon. members that the amendment to The Evidence Act is being undertaken since many jurisdictions in Canada have ceased to have a cabinet minister known as the Provincial Secretary. Indeed it is my understanding that Nova Scotia through the Minister of Justice and Saskatchewan through The Provincial Secretary's Act have retained the office. Other provinces use the term keeper of the great seal. This is the reason for that amendment.

The second area that I would like to draw to the attention of the hon. members are the changes proposed to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007. Through this consequential amendment, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan will truly have its own legislation with the removal of the Executive Council provisions into Bill 31.

With those brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to move second reading of The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendment Act, 2008.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved second reading of Bill No. 32, The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendment Act, 2008. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased once again to get up and talk about Bill 31 and the consequential amendments that come as a result in Bill 32. Mr. Speaker, Bill 31 is a fundamental mistake, and if the government does the right thing and withdraws Bill 31, we won't need Bill 32, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to talk a little bit about Bill 31 and the impact on the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things contained in that Bill. I've dealt with the change from 50,000 to \$350,000 as the expenditure level which would require cabinet approval and an OC which would make that expenditure public knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

[14:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, in an era where provinces are going in the opposite direction and having a greater level of accountability and greater reporting of expenditures as they make them, Mr. Speaker, we have Saskatchewan going contrary to the Canadian norms and in fact increasing the amount not by doubling it, not

by tripling it, Mr. Speaker, but seven times, seven times the amount that was previously approved, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this can lead to a number of things including financial troubles, problems with accountability, funding, Mr. Speaker, and drags out significantly the period of time in which people can be held accountable for those expenditures, Mr. Speaker.

But this Bill also contains a number of other provisions. Bill 31 allows you to open trade missions and offices in jurisdictions in Canada and outside Canada, Mr. Speaker. It allows this to be done very quickly with little or no public consultation, Mr. Speaker, and once again this is something that should have the level of scrutiny that would be required by an order in council, Mr. Speaker, and it would not necessarily be required.

Mr. Speaker, we need to consider very carefully whether we want to go down the road at giving individual ministers powers to spend money up to \$350,000 without cabinet scrutiny and without public scrutiny, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is contrary to what's going on in Canada. This is contrary to good public administration. It's contrary to accountability and transparency, Mr. Speaker. And it's contrary to good business practice, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, in proposing this amendment, haven't looked at what's going on in other provinces obviously, or they would know what's going on in the province of Alberta, the province of Manitoba, what the federal government is doing, Mr. Speaker. And they're going just contrary to the entire direction other jurisdictions are going.

And, Mr. Speaker, what did the Premier say when he was asked about this very issue in a scrum? He said it's because it's too much work, Mr. Speaker. It's too much work to have to have an order in council for every \$50,000 expenditure. Now, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing worse than a lazy government, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing worse than a lazy government and a government that's so lazy that it doesn't want to have levels of transparency and accountability, Mr. Speaker.

It's fundamentally wrong, Mr. Speaker, because citizens of Saskatchewan have a right to know how their government's expending money, Mr. Speaker, and they have a right to know in a timely manner. And this Bill takes that right away from the public of Saskatchewan. It takes it away from the media, Mr. Speaker, who would make the public of Saskatchewan aware of such poor expenditures, Mr. Speaker. And it takes away the right of this opposition to hold them accountable for their actions, Mr. Speaker, in a timely manner where you can make a difference in that action, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, because Bill 32 is consequential amendments as a result of Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, I hope we never, ever have to vote on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because the right thing to do, the proper thing to do, Mr. Speaker, is to withdraw Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, and to allow the members opposite to consider this foolhardy idea, Mr. Speaker, and to allow the members in the backbench who may not have been aware about this idea and what direction it was going in, Mr. Speaker, to consider and look at it and to examine what it means to the people of this province and what it means to accountability and transparency and how it breaks a fundamental promise in their own election platform, Mr. Speaker.

In order to do that, Mr. Speaker, we need to adjourn this debate at this time, on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, to give them chance to withdraw it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 35

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 35 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's obvious to all the people in Saskatchewan who are interested in this particular Bill, the amendments to The Income Tax Act, that those members of the public that have availed themselves of a copy of the Bill online at www.legassembly.sk.ca, they'll know that this is an extremely technical Bill full of formulas that can only be understood by someone who specializes in algebra or someone who specializes in tax law, very complicated.

But the Bill gives effect to three specific items. One is a disability-related income tax credit to increase the caregiver tax credit, the infirm dependent tax credit, the disability tax credit, to increase the amount that's available as a tax credit for people that fall in those categories. We support that. We have no quarrel with those changes. The other two aspects of the Bill in fact relate to pieces of legislation that are before the Legislative Assembly: one that was just dealt with, the graduate retention program; the other, The Active Families Benefit Act or Bill.

With respect to the graduate retention program, the policy issues are being and will be discussed in the Legislative Assembly and the appropriate committee as to the problems, strengths, weaknesses with the graduate retention program. And this Bill simply deals with technical aspects as to how that program or proposed program will relate to The Income Tax Act.

Having said that, I do want to mention a couple of concerns with the graduate retention program and the sense that this is a program that is inward looking. And I'm surprised that the government would feature a program that wants to help students but is in fact very inward looking in terms of it being eligible only for students who graduate in the main from Saskatchewan universities.

Some specific programs outside of Saskatchewan . . . We would have thought that given skills shortages in Saskatchewan, given always a need to attract young people to come to Saskatchewan from other parts of the country, that this particular graduate retention program would have gone further to provide this opportunity to reduce your tuition fees for young people from across the country, not just those who graduate from Saskatchewan universities. Because at the end of the day, we do want to attract young people to move to Saskatchewan from other jurisdictions. And this Bill frankly just doesn't do that.

The other comment that has been made — and will be explored both in the committee that's dealing with this particular Act, also will be dealt with in the committee that's dealing with the income tax amendment — is the complexity of the program in terms of how it is that young people qualify, Mr. Speaker. And if I could just state that again, there are great complexities with respect to this particular Bill as to how it is that graduates will be able to access these funds over a period of seven years. And we'll want to ask questions about the complexity of this program.

The third item that's proposed to be changed in The Income Tax Act as a result of a new initiative of the government is The Active Families Benefit Act, where the government is proposing to provide a \$150 benefit to all families who have children enrolled in sports and activities. It's not clear yet what sports and activities that will include. That's something that will be dealt with during the course of examination of the Bill itself that deals with the active families benefit.

But there is a question here about what is the government's intention, and what is it the government is hoping to achieve. And when we look through the minister's comments when she provided her remarks on second reading, and those are the remarks that at the end of the day we have to refer to if we try to understand what it is the government is seeking to accomplish with a piece of legislation.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that these are the remarks that if a piece of legislation is ever referred to the courts and the courts try to understand what it is that the government is attempting to do, what the government's objectives are with respect to a piece of legislation, the judges will always refer to second reading comments by the government as to what the government had in mind when this legislation was put forward.

And it's interesting to see that when this piece of legislation was put forward, the minister's first comments are that this “. . . will encourage healthy, active families through culture, sport, and recreational activities.” And one of the questions that we will have is, how will the government know? How will the government know that it is in fact encouraging healthy, active families through culture, sport, and recreational activities? How will the government know whether this particular piece of legislation will in fact be encouraging more children?

You know, in a day and age where there's greater accountability, greater focus on performance, greater focus on outcomes of legislation, and greater focus on outcomes of changes in budgets, you know, the public will be wanting to ask, what are the outcomes that the government expects from this piece of legislation? How many more children will become

actively involved in culture, sport, and recreational activities as a result of this piece of legislation? That's a question that the public will be asking. That is a question that we also will be asking, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, I've focused a lot on questions as opposed to debate, and therefore I'm suggesting that the appropriate venue to in fact deal with these questions will be in the appropriate committees of the Legislative Assembly. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations that Bill No. 35, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — To the Crown and Central Agencies Committee, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 38

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 38 — The Corporate Capital Tax Act** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This particular Bill, The Corporation Capital Tax Act, proposes to increase the threshold of funds in terms of paid-up capital of a financial institution that would qualify a financial institution as a small financial institution subject to The Corporation Capital Tax Act.

The Government of Saskatchewan has a percentage capital tax on the paid-up capital in financial institutions. That rate is 3.25 per cent. It was after July 1, 1999 for financial institutions but a separate rate was put into play for small financial institutions. My understanding is that that particular rate applies to only one financial institution that operates in the province of Saskatchewan.

This is a change that's consistent with changes that had been

made in the past. We see no real reason to oppose this Bill. Certainly we'll have some questions about what the appropriate threshold might be for a small financial institution, a threshold that was at one point oh, I believe in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, Mr. Speaker, and is now a threshold of \$1.5 billion. I think to most of the general public \$1.5 billion is not small potatoes and so we certainly may have questions about how long a special rate should be in effect for what is called a small financial institution.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to deal further with this Bill in the appropriate committee.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

[15:00]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Crown Corporations that Bill No. 38, The Corporate Capital Tax Act be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 29

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 29 — The Education Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to engage in debate and pass along some comments and some assessment to Bill 29, The Education Amendment Act. This is a . . . Mr. Speaker, I could argue that I think that there wasn't a more, a piece of legislation with higher expectations on it than this Act right here, something that's really, really, really important to many, many homes, many communities, many students, many families across this province.

This piece of legislation has been highly touted for some time, Mr. Speaker, by the members opposite. I guess as a quick assessment, it's absolutely underwhelming in achieving the goal or the principle for which the members opposite suggested that

this Act would, what it would offer the people of the province. It fails on so many levels. Mr. Speaker, we hear the members opposite speak quite often about campaign promises made, campaign promises delivered. Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd want to argue that we see a lot of low bars here, Mr. Speaker. We see a lot of low bars. And this one here is another example of a very low bar.

But the unfortunate circumstance, Mr. Speaker, is that the expectations on this government, on this issue were really high. And it's a delicate issue, and it's a challenging one. But it's one that could have been addressed by this government, and the bar would have been set a little bit higher. And if they would have held true to what they had stated before, they would have made it over a high bar, and they would have been able to call it a promise made. At this point, you know, they set an awfully low bar, one which I could step over, Mr. Speaker, just like that without much preparation, without much due diligence. And it fails to deliver this promise.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, I think it's also important to mention that the minister dealing with this legislation, that's created this legislation has all the knowledge in the world to address this issue in the way that the Sask Party had suggested that they would. He has all the knowledge in the world. He's met with the groups many times, knows their concerns, and he chose not to follow through with it, Mr. Speaker.

It's important that I talk about the resources that our province has to deliver on this, the promises of the members opposite, of the Saskatchewan Party. They have all the resources in the world, Mr. Speaker, to address the issues of school closures. They chose, they chose again, Mr. Speaker, to not follow through with allocating those resources. And, Mr. Speaker, our minister opposite, our Minister of Education, our Saskatchewan Party government, has all the authority in the world and they chose again, Mr. Speaker . . . to fail the promises for which they placed to the people of our province on the issue of school closures.

So, Mr. Speaker, our minister has the knowledge. Our minister has the resources. Our minister has the authority. He's failed on those pieces right there . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I hear a member opposite saying, well the minister doesn't have the authority. Well I would argue that, through legislation, the minister could create the authority. He has all the authority in the world to set forth the legislation, what we're looking at here today.

The Sask Party led people to believe in this province that they had a plan to address the issue of school closures, and we're seeing here now that it certainly isn't much of a plan, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party offered a whole lot of self-righteous rhetoric for some time, and it's boiled down to something really simple here now, and Mr. Speaker, at least they've recognized how simple it's become. And I quote from their news release, we feel ". . . it important to make sure the process boards of education follow to close rural schools is consistent . . ."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a long way from the lofty goals and the lofty promises that were once spouted by the members opposite, and it again shows the failed promise that that's evident here. When in opposition the Saskatchewan Party

members were aggressive. And they talked an awful lot, Mr. Speaker, about how schools shouldn't close. Now that they're government, they're tweaking a process, playing with some of the ends, but in the end, Mr. Speaker, a lot of communities, a lot of families are really disappointed with this legislation.

The members opposite sometimes talk about hope, Mr. Speaker. They talked lots about it in their campaign. I think that the people across this province right now are realizing that this hope was more hype, Mr. Speaker. The hope was hype, and they failed to deliver on the hope message that they had delivered. This Bill simply just lets communities down, Mr. Speaker.

So if we're just going to recap over things a little bit, their position in opposition was they were against school closures. They suggested quite clearly that they had a vision and a plan to address them. They offered to many . . . They criss-crossed the province talking to communities, speaking to all the different groups who had these concerns, letting them know that they've been heard, and that they would be able to move forward with a viable plan. This simply hasn't happened. They offered hope that school closures would be staved off, possibly reopen. Hasn't happened, Mr. Speaker.

Many voters had extremely high expectations of the Saskatchewan Party with regard to school closures, but rightfully so, Mr. Speaker. These high expectations were there rightfully so. They were there because our now Minister of Finance laid out clear expectations of what he would deliver, because our Premier laid out plans saying that he would help, because most recently we've had our Premier and a high-profile member of the cabinet sharing that they had a plan. So those high expectations aren't because those communities are fool heartedly fool hearted. It's because they've been betrayed on some promises.

I guess I'd like to bring in a couple other resources just to take a look and see what some of the other groups are saying here. But I have one here from the *Leader-Post* here today. And I think that the title here says, "Education minister flunks the test." Now this is written by Dawn Reich, a concerned citizen within the province. And this comes from April 23, here today, from the *Leader-Post*. I'm just going to read a little excerpt from this, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

Throughout many legislative assembly sessions, our current education minister, Ken Krawetz, has quoted *Hansard* transcripts in the House during debate to support his position.

Below is a quote to remind the Saskatchewan Party government of the passion for taxpayers that was displayed in the past by our current minister of education.

"**Mr. Krawetz:** — [this is his message] Madam Minister, you and I both agree on the need for school boards to have autonomy from government, but the ultimate authority should always lie in the hands of the taxpayers — the people who pay the bill . . ."

"The Saskatchewan Party believes taxpayers should have the same right to reverse the decisions of school boards if

they do not have the support of the public . . . I gave notice of a private members' Bill that would allow voters to force a binding referendum on a school board decision by gathering enough names on a petition."

I go on, or Mr. Krawetz goes on:

"All we're saying is that taxpayers should have the same authority over school board decisions. After all, school boards collect as much or more in taxes as municipalities."

So, Mr. Speaker, speaking again to . . . the people of our province aren't fool hearted. They had rightful high expectations, ones which have not been followed through by our current minister, by our current ministry, by our current Saskatchewan Party government.

I look back, Mr. Speaker, to some quotes around from our current Premier here. And I'm going to quote from the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, April 18, 2007. So this is only one year ago — I know the minister opposite's worried about dates here — so this is one year ago. And this is our now Premier, and this is last year, and this is our Premier, now Premier speaking and being quoted, Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*. And I'm going to quote this:

Wall said the party would end closure for most of 50 schools by designating funds to schools of opportunity and schools of necessity.

Schools of opportunity would be schools where local leaders and business identify pending development that needs schools to attract population. Schools of necessity are schools where "too much time is spent on the bus."

Wall said that instead of spending more money on busing "we think the money should go to classrooms, more teachers."

Well again, Mr. Speaker, the people, the families, the communities in Saskatchewan aren't fool hearted. They're incredibly intelligent, and their high expectations were there for the right reasons. I'll maybe touch on another piece here of why these expectations should be high, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to quote an article here from June 22, 2007. The article title is "Sask Party plans deal with rural school divisions." This was in *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to quote our now Minister of Finance:

"We've outlined a number of criteria that we are going to insist on as the new government that school divisions have to meet in order to consider significant change of status of schools, in particular, closures."

That was our critic of Education in opposition. He's now our Minister of Finance. And again, high expectations offered to the people of our province. They aren't fool hearted, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party government just simply hasn't followed through with those promises.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to look at another piece of information, and this would be June 21, 2007. And this is a Saskatchewan

Party caucus news release. And I quote, "Saskatchewan Party Learning Critic Rod Gantefer today said trustees need new tools to give communities the opportunity to keep their schools open." I go on. He goes on:

"These communities need to have discussions about complimentary uses for school buildings, whether as libraries, seniors' centres, town offices and medical centres. Trustees also need an enhanced set of standards and criteria for school closures, tools that are not yet available and will be provided."

Gantefer said he understands that keeping schools slated for closure open will cost money, and promised those funds will be paid-out retroactively, should the Saskatchewan Party form government.

"There needs to be a mechanism available to offer transitional funds to school boards who want to explore their options, and that's what I'm offering [here] today," Gantefer said.

And I'll end quoting that piece of literature, but, retroactively, Mr. Speaker. I mean this completely flies in the face again. Not only were expectations really high, not only did they fail to deliver meaningful changes to the Act that they had promised, but this is a, I mean completely, 360 degree reversal here. Retroactively. Well I think the families and the citizens and the students within Eyebrow would be interested in seeing this comment again. Now it's just not, it's just not a good, good practice, Mr. Speaker, to say something very clear that you're going to do and blatantly defy your promise.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's been suggested by the members opposite that it's rather fool heartedly that communities expect schools to be, school closures to be staved off or to remain open, but again I'll use another piece of evidence here to show that, that the people of our province and the communities within our province aren't fool hearted, that they are incredibly intelligent and those high expectations were there for all the right reasons, and I quote ". . . the official opposition at least has a plan that the people of this province can rely on . . ."

Now that's our now Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. He's definitely in a position of influence here right now within his caucus and unfortunately failing to deliver on those promises. Well, Mr. Speaker, those high expectations come right from the top. They come right from the top, Mr. Speaker.

When I talk about the top of government, we talk about our Premier, and we were quoting quotes that were one year old, six months old, but we'll get into something more recent here and we'll go back to February, the start of February, the end of January. It's some comments that were made in the *Southwest Booster* on February 1. Title is "Wall keeping promises in supporting schools." Well this is a good thing, Mr. Speaker. At least one would think when your Premier very blatantly is very supportive of keeping schools open, we should have trust in our Premier, Mr. Speaker. I'll quote a little bit from this, this article. I quote:

"We have not been able to change the Act. That'll be happening in the spring."

However, Wall feels that they have been clear on what the upcoming changes are.

“We have called for a much more rigorous process, when we were in opposition we called for a much more rigorous process before a decision could be taken to close a school, because once you close a school it’s almost irrevocable. How do you re-open them? So are all the questions being asked around economic opportunity? We’re going to work on our designation about what we call schools of opportunity, which would preclude closure if they receive that designation.”

“And then there’s remote schools. At some point you’re going to ask kids to be on a bus for too long, and so decisions need to be made on that basis. So we haven’t changed that. We’re still committed to those.”

Wall said this work is currently being done by Education Minister Ken Krawetz who is working towards spring legislation changes [from the article].

Well . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . yes, that’s right, Mr. Speaker. Well, well, well. We have seen these changes, and they’re underwhelming. They’re not effective. And they’ve let down people across our province. And I’ll, I think I’ll talk a little bit more about . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The minister opposite is talking about, well wait till we see them all. And I know that’s no solace for families in Climax or Richmond or Eyebrow. And they’re not waiting to see more; they’re waiting to watch their school close here this spring.

[15:15]

So I guess I would urge the minister opposite, who says he’s got great plans coming forward, that he should put his plan forward. I guess I urge the minister if he wants to shout opposite, that he stand up in these chambers and that he put forward his legislative plans that are going to offer promises which he shouts from his chair. Because we know one thing about Sask Party promises, Mr. Speaker: they’re not worth much.

And so we wonder again about why there was high expectations about school closures, Mr. Speaker. I’ll take another quote here from the DiscoverMooseJaw site. This was on February 1, 2008, and this is our Minister of Enterprise and Innovation.

The criteria are being flushed out now and I’m not sure of exactly what they’ll be yet but, in the next few days, I understand the Minister of Education will have those criteria out to the boards and they’ll be laid out in detail and the boards will have a good idea on how to apply them . . .

This was our now minister . . . well this was the Minister of Enterprise of Innovation. This is from February 1. He is the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation. So, Mr. Speaker, it definitely misleads the public. It definitely causes high expectations on this government, and again, rightfully so.

I’m going to share one more piece here, Mr. Speaker. And this is coming from canada.com, and this is on the date of Tuesday, March 11 from the article “Decision day on school closures,”

and this is a quote here:

Krawetz explained that he and Premier Brad Wall have been in contact with the school divisions in their constituencies of Yorkton and Swift Current. However, as education minister, Krawetz said he did not send out notice to every school division because word of the changes had spread.

Well, Mr. Speaker, hoping that the word would spread isn’t good enough. You know, as opposition, as members of public, communities, there’s too many people in the dark. You can’t simply expect that from the members opposite that the word will spread.

And I tell you when you’re looking at communication on such a delicate and important issue — possibly the most important issue to many families, many students, many communities here today — we see selective communication. We see inequitable communication, and we see communication that simply hasn’t been fair.

For the minister and our Premier to be communicating so selectively, Mr. Speaker, while communities and community groups are active and fighting for their schools to be open, that’s not fair, Mr. Speaker. It’s not fair to the groups working to keep those schools open. And it’s not fair, Mr. Speaker, to the school boards engaged in those delicate and difficult processes where they’re trying to engage the public throughout that time. Offering false hope is not a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to speak a little bit now, and I guess I’m not going to speak and pass my own assessments on things at this point but I’m going to look a little bit at some of the third party assessments of what these changes to the Act are going to mean.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association say, well we can live with it in essence. SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] president David Marit is really upset with it. He’s concerned with the lack of appeal process. He would desire to see more time for consultation, and he’s very clear that our current government was very well aware of their needs.

We look at groups that are fighting to keep schools open. We’ve got Save Our Schools and RealRenewal, and they just simply say it’s too short of a time period. And they’re concerned about this urban-rural divide which could be addressed numerous ways. Funding would definitely be one of them, Mr. Speaker.

School boards have the challenge of inadequate funding and there’s some third party quotes around that, Mr. Speaker. So I’m going to, I guess, take you directly to a few of these quotes. And from the *Leader-Post* on April 15, Mr. Speaker, I’m going to quote, “School act change draws criticism” is the article. And I’m going to quote Todd Lewis. I start quoting here now:

Todd Lewis, spokesman for a group of residents that formed Save Our Schools, said a school year is not enough time to determine a school’s fate, and had called [for] a two-year review process.

"We're into a situation here where there's a list of schools that are up for closure and we're fiddling away with the edges," said Lewis.

"The clock is ticking away here and (communities) are not seeing any satisfaction out of these changes."

I'm going to move down in the article, and I'm going to begin again:

But David Marit, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, questioned the value of school review committees when they don't have any power.

... "We're upset with the whole thing," Marit said.

"When you look at what's happening out in rural Saskatchewan we're seeing a boom like we've never seen before," Marit said. "Why would they even want to be considering closing rural schools?"

So that's some third party assessment of this Act, Mr. Speaker.

Go on to some other pieces here. The title's interesting in this one, Mr. Speaker. It's from the *Leader-Post*, Friday, April 18. The title, "An 'F' for Sask. Party." An F, Mr. Speaker. An F would indicate they failed, and this is the Ministry of Education. They know what F's are.

I'll move down into the, into the article here, Mr. Speaker, and I'll quote:

"The issue is that the reality is unchanged. Schools that were going to be closing yesterday are still going to be closing today," said Trish Elliott with Real Renewal.

I'll move on to a quote here from Mr. Lewis:

"We're just at a loss to wonder where a lot of the things they spoke about a year ago . . . [were or] . . ."

I'm going to start that over, Mr. Speaker. And I quote:

"We're just at a loss to wonder where a lot of the things they spoke about a year ago, where are those promises now?" . . .

An Hon. Member: — One thing before an election.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — That's right. One thing before an election, Mr. Speaker. One thing for quite a bit of time to get on the record before an election. Something completely different afterwards.

I'll pull out a title here from CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news on April 17. The title — pretty big bold letters here — is "School closure law called broken promise." Well it's factual reporting; that's what many are calling it. I'll move on into the article here, and I'll quote:

However, it won't affect the current school year and it only applies to rural school divisions.

That's disappointing to Trish Elliott, who represents Real Renewal, a group opposed to school closures in Regina.

"It's a lot of broken promises instead of hope," she said.

And I'll stop quoting from that article, Mr. Speaker.

I'll move on to one I alluded to here today, but the title's definitely worth mentioning again. And that's today, Mr. Speaker, April 23, here in the *Leader-Post* — big bold letters — "Education minister flunks the test."

I'm going to move on, Mr. Speaker. There's many ways that school closures can be addressed. Funding's a big part as well and, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing inadequate funding across the board here in Saskatchewan. In essence 20 out of 28 school divisions have received status quo or less funding here this year, and that's certainly not going to allow school divisions to respond to the needs of school closures, the diverse needs of education within our province, Mr. Speaker.

I know we've seen some pretty clear quotes on this as well. And I think I'm going to touch base in a moment here on some of those from board Chair Gord Stewart from Prairie South. But I'm also going to mention at the same time here, Mr. Speaker, they failed to follow through on their promises on the Act. They failed to deliver adequate funding, with 20 out of 28 school divisions receiving status quo or less.

And they've off-loaded, Mr. Speaker, a very, very important tool to rural Saskatchewan in accessing education in the correspondence school and technology supported learning. To off-load this on to divisions, Mr. Speaker, at this time is nothing more than a further burden on school divisions. They've been speaking out on this. They're concerned with it. Mr. Speaker, they need the resources and they need a plan from this ministry. I hope we see one soon on that end.

But I will touch base on those quotes, Mr. Speaker, from Gord Stewart of Prairie South. And these were released in a memorandum on April 9, 2008. And I'll quote from the actual memorandum: "Rhetoric about 'saving' rural schools is just that . . ."

I'll move down a little bit, Mr. Speaker, so we can save time:

With only \$1 million set aside in the budget, funding for "schools of opportunities" appears to be a band-aid solution at best, and, at worst, a red herring for the public. It gives the appearance of supporting all rural schools, while allowing the government to avoid responsibility for funding them at a level that would encourage and allow long-term sustainability.

I'm going to go on, Mr. Speaker:

Talk is cheap. Education is not. It's time to put the money where the campaign promises were and level the playing field for rural school divisions like ours.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I've intended to do here today or set out to do is to share not my assessments as opposition here but the assessment of citizens of our province, groups which are

committed to educational excellence in our province. And that's another example right there.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the actual amendment changes, they actually reflect the common practice of many boards, many school divisions for some time, Mr. Speaker. And I guess in reflecting what's already been going on and what's already been done is really dismissive of those school boards to have laid something out with high expectations, certainly said to school boards across this province that you haven't done enough in the past, that you've failed on that end.

I know here in Regina it's been an ugly year both for school board officials and also for communities with the high hopes that they had, Mr. Speaker, and the dismissive kind of comments around the efforts of school boards. And now to see an Act that completely fails to deliver on the promises that the Sask Party had granted for so long, Mr. Speaker, it's a pretty big failure, Mr. Speaker, and it's a shame.

I do have a couple more comments here, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The minister is interested in me going back to mention one of his quotes here and he was quoted from 1998 so it's important that he's aware or that the province is aware that that's right. The Sask Party has long, long, long, long been strong on the record against school closures, all the way from 1998 all the way up until the election and even some of their ministers and even our Premier since the election.

These amendments will do little to keep schools from the chopping block, Mr. Speaker. While the government has well over \$1 billion in the bank, enough money to fund pretty much anything they have in mind, the Sask Party is doing next to nothing for schools of opportunity and schools of necessity. One million dollars is a pittance, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. There's a few other conversations going on. I would ask the members to take them behind the bar. I'm having a little hard time hearing the member that has the floor. I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I guess if the members opposite are passionate about this issue, I guess I will remind them that communities, families across this province are passionate as well and I urge them to stand up — not just to banter but to stand up and make those changes for which they promised.

The Saskatchewan Party has set aside only \$1 million in this budget for schools of opportunity. That's a pittance, Mr. Speaker, a pittance — only enough to fully fund three such schools. That doesn't sound like much of an opportunity for Saskatchewan school children. It falls short of the quotes I was using before of our Premier back two months ago here down in his constituency.

The revised education Act makes no mention of schools of necessity, not at all. In fact schools of necessity have now been brought in as a nameplate and they take over the remote school status that we had in place before, Mr. Speaker. But schools of necessity were suggested to be something different. Again there were some things — kind of an element of hope — behind their

words in schools of necessity. And now again we've seen that those are simply just hype, Mr. Speaker. They've adopted what we were doing, put a new name on it.

You know, we talked about the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. They have expressed concerns that the provincial criteria may not work well for all boards and that the stringent criteria could hamper a board's day-to-day operations.

So we have stakeholders across the board, Mr. Speaker, who aren't happy. SARM is disappointed; SOS, Save Our Schools is disappointed; and RealRenewal is very disappointed, Mr. Speaker.

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, I guess, that the Sask Party will respond to these concerns because they do have the time and I mentioned before that our minister has the knowledge, our minister has the resources, Mr. Speaker — we sure have the resources in our province — and the minister has the authority to do some things about this issue, Mr. Speaker.

And at the very least as a member of opposition I ask the minister and the current government to follow through on the commitments they made prior to being elected. And I guess I would challenge the members opposite and I challenge the ministry to maybe take a page out of the ministry of municipalities' book here, and take a look and say, you're right, we failed. We failed miserably. We need a heck of a lot more money for municipalities, which by the way certainly isn't enough here in Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, and across the board.

[15:30]

But just like the minister of municipalities, the Minister of Education has failed families, communities across the province on the topic of school closures. And I think right now our minister has time to rally and to speak to his cabinet and make sure that those funds are invested in a similar way that the minister from municipalities happened. I challenge the minister to step up and to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I have many, many, many more questions about this Act, and I guess more than anything, its intent, Mr. Speaker. So at this point here right now I am going to refer or move this Bill to committee.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 29, The Education Amendment Act be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I'll recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I designate that Bill No. 29, The Education Amendment Act, 2008, be referred to the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 25

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Heppner that **Bill No. 25 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to enter into this debate. This is an important piece of legislation. Whenever we amend significant environmental protection Acts like The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, we have to be careful about making sure we're doing the right thing. And so we'll have many questions on this, but first of all I do want to say and I do want to go on record that I am disappointed on this, in this Act.

This was an opportunity to make significant headway in terms of protecting habitat in this province, and in fact it looks like we're taking away habitat. In fact there's a net loss and not making a significant gain. We often hear the minister talk about going green. And I was just listening to the previous speaker talk about hype. And this seems to be the theme of this government — a lot of hype but not a lot of action.

And here you have a case of an amendment to an Act taking away land that is very, very important. The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is a significant piece because we know in the South, southern Saskatchewan, that so much land has been lost to agriculture throughout the past many decades. And in fact, I understand in five years we lost 2 million acres of natural landscape. This is significant. And because of that, we saw this Act being created.

And so we see the situation today. It seems like a relatively straightforward piece of legislation but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of questions. And a lot of people get disappointed when we talk about the good things that are happening in Saskatchewan. But we have to say that, I have to say that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. If you have conversations, take them behind the bar. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an important debate that we're having here today on wildlife habitat protection. And I am sure the members do want to hear this. And we have a situation where, you know, we have Saskatchewan's wildlife populations living on far less than one-quarter of their original habitat.

In Saskatchewan, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act protects over 3 million acres of uplands and wetlands in its natural state.

And this represents one-third of the wildlife habitat in the agricultural region. This sounds impressive. It is a good start. But there are some significant questions.

And in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last night we talked in estimates, the Environment estimates, about what is the progress being made under the biodiversity action plan, something that was started in 2004, goes for five years to 2009. How are we doing in that area, in that objectives about representative area networks, making sure that we designate and protect certain pieces of land in this province so that there is a natural diversity for our wildlife and for species at risk? And this is very, very important.

And so it's a question of hype. Are they going to really deliver or are they going to quietly do other things while running under a banner of times past when we were making significant, significant gains?

We are at about 9 per cent of protected lands in this province. Our goal is 12 per cent. And that's very, very important. Twelve per cent is the United Nations target. We should be reaching that, and we should be reaching it as quickly as we can. But we're only at 9 per cent, and we see legislation like this where we're taking steps backwards, steps backwards, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is of great concern.

Of course there are some questions that we have, and we'll have these in committee. And we expect good answers on that. We expect to be talking about each parcel of land. Why are they taking them out? We're happy to see land going in. We'll talk about that too because we want to make sure the land is representative — not just any piece of land, but land that is representative of the area. When we're trading pieces of land back and forth, they've got to be of equal value. And the value that we're going to be looking at is the biodiversity value. That's very, very important.

And the second question we're going to have is, what about the consultations? You know it's one thing, and we've seen this so much from this government in terms, when they use the word consultations, it can be my way or the highway — no consultations. You have to accidentally find out about things on the website. Unless you're being very vigilant about finding out about consultations, you will not find out.

And then on the other hand they have the Cadillac of consultations — what's happening around the insurance, crop insurance program — something that's very good to see. But why aren't they using that model for other consultations? That's the bar, and we expect to see that in all sorts of things.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are questions that we have about this very important piece of legislation, so at this point I'd like to move adjournment of this debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — . . . has moved adjournment. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 27

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. D'Autremont that **Bill No. 27 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, going through this Bill in some detail, and it's very technical and in some cases it will change . . . it's purely housekeeping, but there are a couple of areas that go beyond what we have done in the province before. The you-brew and you-vin operations are new additions. There are a couple of provinces that have moved in this direction and have these types of operations. The minister was quite supportive when he went out and made the announcement, which is good, Mr. Speaker.

But I know that there are provinces other than Saskatchewan that have these operations. I believe there's three, and there has been a number of concerns in the regulation area and whether the regulations are difficult to enforce. So there's been a number of provinces that haven't gone in this direction.

A number of other pieces that are contained within the legislation itself are housekeeping, and while there are some questions that we have on the legislation itself, Mr. Speaker, I would at this time like to move Bill No. 27 to committee so that we can get into more detailed discussions with the minister and SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] on exact interpretation and intention of the legislative changes that are proposed here. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move that Bill No. 27 be moved to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — Question. Is the Assembly ready for question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — Question. The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister for Gaming that Bill No. 27, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I designate that Bill No. 27, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2008 be referred to the Crowns committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 24

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 24 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I have a new name for this Bill, and it would be called the oops Bill. They didn't get it right the first time, so this is the cleanup that is required. This Bill is proof positive that Justice did not draft this Bill because the Justice ministry just doesn't make these kinds of mistakes. The logic defies reason, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Party is on record stating that these changes to Labour Relations Board where firing the Chair despite the fact that his term was up in the fall, and reducing the number of Vice-Chairs from two to one, and yet claiming that the Labour Relations Board will be delivering quicker decisions — it defies all reason, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it defies the logic given that, combined with the other amendments being made to The Trade Union Act, that there will be likely an increase in activity at the Labour Relations Board. At a time when the province needs to embrace each and every worker or potential worker in our province and needs to entice workers from outside the province, this government has taken a stable, fair, and balanced labour environment and in the Premier's own terminology, declared war on working people of this province.

There was no impediment to the growth and vibrancy of this province because of The Trade Union Act. Who was complaining about needing these changes, Mr. Speaker? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is simply based in ideology.

A member of the transition team, Doug Emsley, has had a number of experiences with the Labour Relations Board that he would, I'm sure, view as unfavourable. Was this payback by a member of the transition team with respect to the dealings with the Labour Relations Board?

Yet another member of the transition team, Ken Love, ended up being part of the decision-making process that saw the Chair of the Labour Relations Board and the Vice-Chairs -- Jay Seibel was the Chair, and the two Vice-Chairs — being fired only to be replaced by Ken Love himself at a cost of \$60,000 more per year.

These may be dismissed as coincidences by the government, but the people of Saskatchewan are saying, no way. These are way more than coincidences; this is an all-out attack.

Mr. Speaker, as if these situations aren't surprising or suspicious enough, let's look at the ads for the Vice-Chair position. When the Vice-Chair position was posted on

November 15, 2006, the qualifications for the Vice-Chair position were that you will have . . . It reads, quote:

You will have five or more years of litigation experience in the area of labour law and extensive experience with administration tribunals; extensive knowledge of labour legislation; [and] training and experience in mediation and conciliation practices.

The ad for April 12, 2008 for the current Vice-Chair which is being sought by the current government reads that:

The successful candidate will have a law degree and a minimum of five years of experience as a lawyer.

So no longer are we asking for litigation experience in the area of labour law. We are now simply looking for someone who has a law degree with a minimum of five years experience as a lawyer. They still need a knowledge of administrative tribunal process and labour law issues, but again, what else is missing, Mr. Speaker? Well look at that, the fact that the past ads read that the qualified candidate had to have training and experience in mediation and conciliation practices is now absent from the ad altogether. So we are looking for people now, Mr. Speaker, as successful candidates for the Vice-Chair of Labour Relations Board with far less limited qualification experiences than ever were before, Mr. Speaker. And would this even be coming to the Public Service Commission if it weren't for the opposition's outrage at the fact that this might be another appointed position as was the Chair of the Labour Relations Board.

[15:45]

The Sask Party's political interference of the Labour Relations Board is not only a frontal attack on labour; it is a frontal attack on democracy and democratic institutions. The Saskatchewan Party's attitude of, well we won and now you have to do what we say, simply smacks of a schoolyard bully, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, I believe that it was the *Planet S* newspaper that even said that. The Saskatchewan Party political meddling with the Labour Relations Board is so troubling, Mr. Speaker, that the Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers felt compelled to send a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Labour spelling out their concerns, and that is quite substantial, Mr. Speaker.

Firing the Chair and two Vice-Chairs of Labour Relations Board without cause and replacing the Chair with a Saskatchewan Party insider, no less a member of the transition team or an advisor to the transition team, and at a huge salary increase is cynical, self-serving, and irresponsible government, Mr. Speaker.

Along with Bills 5 and 6, this amendment to The Trade Union Act is part of a multi-pronged attack by the Saskatchewan Party government on Saskatchewan working people. But should we be surprised, Mr. Speaker? We shouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker. We shouldn't be surprised because this is what the Sask Party government has — Sask Party, I apologize — Sask Party has been saying all along for as long as I've been reading about what they've been saying on the issues of working people in this province, on labour in this province. And certainly since I've been an elected member sitting in the Chamber since November 2003, that's all we've heard. And now we have the

proof.

The Sask Party has never hidden its dislike of labour. These attacks on working people are precisely what the Sask Party has said it would do except for one exception. The exception, of course, would be Bill 5. That would be the flip-flop of the Sask Party. That would be the saying one thing and doing another. That would be the Minister of Health saying, we don't need to put this into legislation; we can simply negotiate these things. And the Premier's saying the same thing, that essential services doesn't need to be legislated; it can be negotiated. And it should be negotiated.

But what did they do once they got elected, Mr. Speaker? It was one of the first things they did was to legislate essential services legislation and do it to the greatest degree. In defending the director of communications in anti-labour comments that she made on the now infamous videotape of the Premier, that were really anti-labour and would be considered draconian, well guess what word, among others, labour is using to describe these changes that are being made to the labour laws in Saskatchewan?

This and its other attacks on labour is the Sask Party pursuing its right wing ideology at the expense of Saskatchewan people. Not just labour, Mr. Speaker, it's at the expense of Saskatchewan working people. And not even necessarily the people that are working now, but the people that need to be enticed to work in this province because the one thing we know for sure from any consultations that have ever taken place with business and labour, is that we are suffering a labour shortage. We are suffering a crisis in terms of labour and the amount of labour that we have. And not only are we suffering that, Mr. Speaker, but so is every other province as Saskatchewan.

So we have to be highly competitive for labour in this province, because every other province is looking at doing the same thing. And creating a war with working people or creating a war with the people who are not yet working, Mr. Speaker, is no way to entice working people to this province.

And there's an old expression, Mr. Speaker, that is, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, Mr. Speaker, the system wasn't broke. The system was working very well, thank you very much. There were no unbalances in the system. As a matter of fact, it's now being said by some members of the business community that there was balance before and there was balance when the NDP put these things into legislation.

And when the Sask Party comes in, they create unbalance. They create war. They create strife. They create misery. They create a situation where we might be suffering in terms of our province moving forward as a booming economy, might be suffering because of the war they're creating with working people.

It's now being said in the business community that the NDP had to create a balanced . . .

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

Ms. Morin: — It's now being said by the business community, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP had a balanced labour environment.

And it's now being said by some members of the business community . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, they laugh. They laugh hysterically. They don't just laugh, but they laugh hysterically. So I wonder if the working people of this province will find it humorous. They laugh hysterically at the situation that they are now imposing upon the working people in this province in terms of protections that they now enjoy.

Are they going to be laughing at occupational health and safety standards along the way? Are they going to be laughing at other standards that protect the workers in this province along the way? I guess that remains to be seen, but we certainly see how they're laughing at the working people in this province right now with their hysterical antics across the way, Mr. Speaker. How sad is all I can say.

So let me get back to the point I was making. The point is there are now members in the business community who are saying that the NDP created a balance to the labour environment in this province. Things were moving forward beautifully in this province. We've seen nothing but progress, progress, progress over many years. We are now enjoying the booming economy situation that we have. Everything is running tickety-boo and these people in the business . . .

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

Ms. Morin: — And these people in the business community, Mr. Speaker, are now saying, here we have the Sask Party government and what are they doing? They are creating, they are creating strife. They are creating, well quite frankly, a toxic labour environment. They are creating a situation that is going to have to be corrected by an NDP government when it gets back in power, Mr. Speaker. That's what members of the business community are saying now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing out of my left ear when my right ear can't really understand what's going on. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know there's a tactic that is used when someone doesn't want to hear what someone else is saying. They simply get louder. So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we can continue on in a meaningful dialogue so that the opposition can . . . I mean, sorry, that the government, my apologies, will actually hear the words of what is being said to us by the working people of this province, because — as it was when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker — people speak to government. People speak to the opposition. And we are getting these reports, and these reports need to be heard by the government as well. And heaven forbid if they decide that they don't want to listen to them, and they don't won't to heed them because quite frankly it will only be to their harm.

There is also situations, Mr. Speaker, where as I said the Labour Relations Board is likely to see more activity. When you make changes to the labour relations Act, and especially the sweeping changes that are — The Trade Union Act, I'm sorry — that are currently coming forward, there is going to be increased activity. I fail to understand and not just myself, Mr. Speaker. The community fails to understand how those decisions are

going to be rendered in a timely fashion and not just in a timely fashion, but the government is actually claiming that these decisions are going to be rendered very quickly.

When you have a situation when you have one less Vice-Chair on the Labour Relations Board, that is confusing to many, many people, Mr. Speaker. Unless of course the sentiment is that the Labour Relations Board is truly now going to be a biased entity, and that if any claims that come forward with respect to unfair labour practices on behalf of a union or unfair labour practices on behalf of a worker, in terms of being coerced or any of those types of employer communications, unless all of those are simply going to be rubber-stamped and denied, Mr. Speaker, then I guess those things can be processed much more quickly if there isn't thoughtful process given to the decision making that is being done. But I guess that'll be remain to be seen in terms of the amount of things that will be carried forward in terms of decisions that are rendered by the Labour Relations Board.

So, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, misguided and simple-minded Sask Party ideology will stifle, actually stifle economic growth by causing labour unrest and fostering an adversarial relationship between business and labour in this province, Mr. Speaker. I pray, I pray it isn't so. I pray that things will go forward the way they are now, but I fear the worst, Mr. Speaker. My hope is being dwindled. I fear the worst simply because of the way they reacted, the government reacted today to my comments. I fear the worst that what I predict will come true. And I would now at this time like to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Walsh Acres has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to allow the Standing Committee on Human Services to continue with its work this afternoon, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. to allow for the work of committees.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:56.]

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