



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

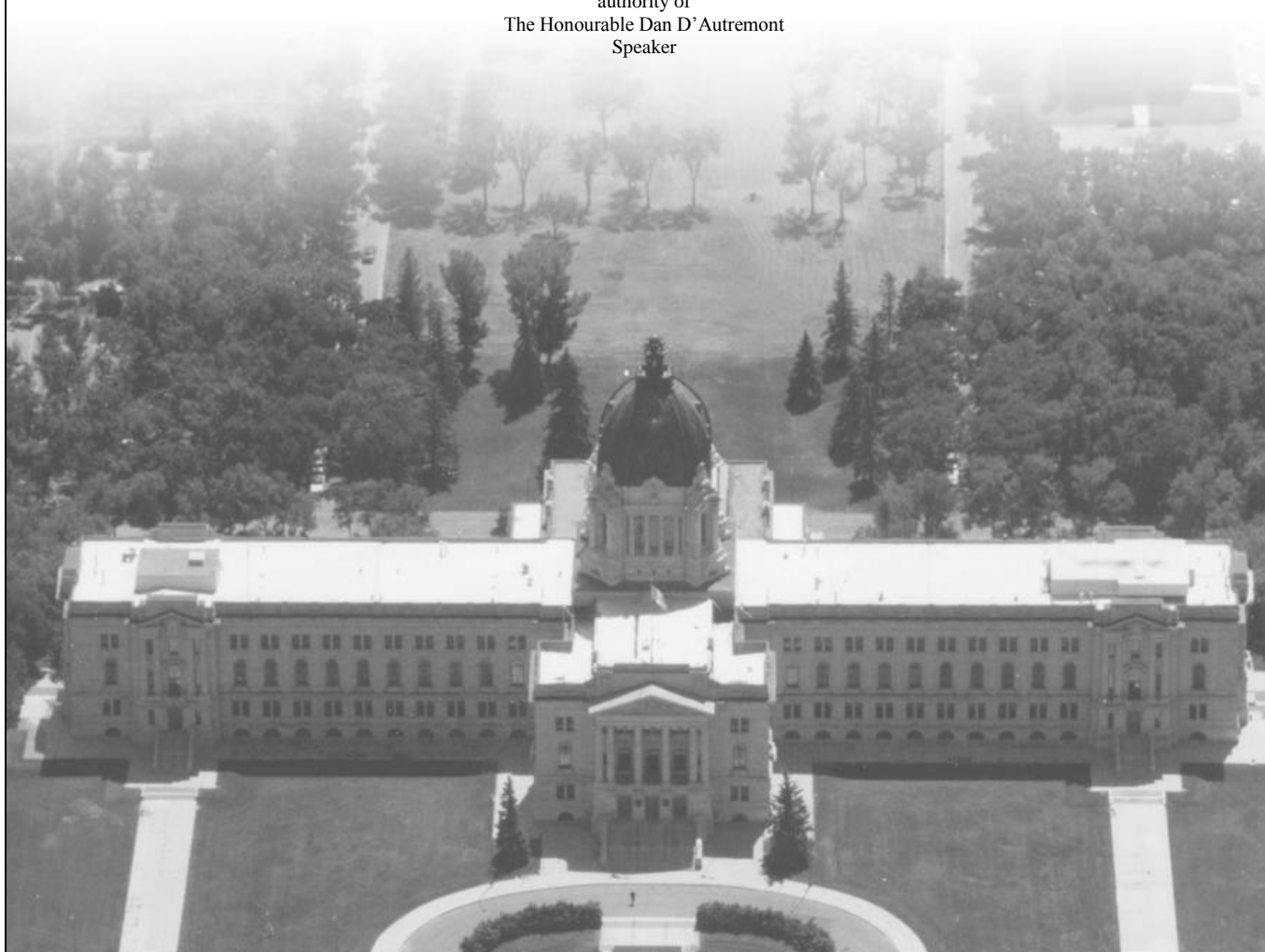
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

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Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
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Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
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Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
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Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
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Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, it is my pleasure to introduce students and staff, the 2012 graduating class of SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Kawacatoose practical nursing program.

If everyone could give a wave when I say your name. The students: Marilou Bautista-Godhe, Roxane Burym, Leah Hesse, Rita Karakochuk, Deborah Patteeuw, Megan Pele, Maxine Poorman, and Twyla Poorman. And the faculty: Sharon Flaman; Lana Prystai; the coordinator for SIAST, Michell Jesse; the coordinator/liason with SIAST and the Kawacatoose First Nation, Cheryl Poorman; and assistant, Daylene Worm.

The partnership between SIAST and Kawacatoose First Nation was first formed in 2006 due to the excellent work of Kawacatoose Chief Dennis Dustyhorn, who saw the high demand for nurses in rural areas and the need in his community for education in health care. The SIAST-Kawacatoose partnership is the first of its kind in Canada, where SIAST provides the practical nursing program to First Nations people from the Kawacatoose and surrounding area. This class will be the third successful class of students to graduate, and I had the privilege of teaching these students for a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in congratulating these students on their achievements and welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Regina Coronation Park in welcoming and congratulating these students from the Kawacatoose LPN [licensed practical nurse] program. A little bit of an addition to the information provided by the member from Coronation Park: the late Richard Poorman, the late Chief Richard Poorman, I recall the first person I'd ever heard talk about this program was him talking about it with then Premier Calvert and the vision that was had for the people to make sure that you have those educational opportunities where you need people doing the work.

So I also had the privilege, Mr. Speaker, of attending the first graduating ceremony for the class along with the member from Saskatoon Massey Place and the member from Arm River-Watrous. And it's really good to see you here today and to see that progress and that success being carried forward. Congratulations and welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with both the member from Coronation Park and the member from Regina Elphinstone in welcoming the students here from the Kawacatoose LPN program. I'd especially like to . . . I should say that Quinton is just outside of my constituency although the people from Quinton continue to . . . And we welcome their calls. It used to be in my constituency. But I'd especially like to extend a special welcome to Sharon Flaman, one of the instructors, and Megan Pele, one of the students. They come from my hometown, and of course everybody in this Assembly knows that's Cupar. And I'd like them all to welcome them here.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions, if I may.

The first introduction, Mr. Speaker, is of the Member of Parliament for Regina Qu'Appelle, who I know must be on a break from parliament because they really can't have it without him. I think he's the youngest Speaker in the history of the House of Commons. And when we were there in Ottawa here, I guess a couple of weeks ago, we had a chance to visit with Mr. Speaker and saw, we had a chance to see his offices there and a few other appointments that accrued to the officer. Mr. Speaker, if you're aware of those, I'd ask you not to get any ideas. But we want to welcome him to his Legislative Assembly. It's good to see Andrew Scheer in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I have a very important introduction. We are honoured to have with us the consul general of Japan who's been in the province for meetings, Susumu Fukuda and his wife, Alicia. We'll ask them to stand. We're very grateful they could be here.

Also joining them is the newly appointed honorary consul for Japan, Victor Sawa. Maestro, good to see you. And his wife, Lesley, it's great to have you here.

Mr. Speaker, we would say, would take this occasion . . . Because it was 12 months ago right about now that Japan was dealing with the horrific results of the earthquake and the tsunami and, Mr. Speaker, we want to say on behalf of this Assembly, on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan to the consul general, how much our hearts and prayers still go to the people of Japan as they continue to rebuild after that tragedy.

We also want to thank Japan, through the consul general, for the great partnership that we have between the province of Saskatchewan and Japan. It was 2011 that Japan overtook India as our third most important destination for exports in this province, agricultural products and potash. We have a great and dynamic partnership between companies like Mitsui at Yorkton for example and the canola crushing plant, and also with Hitachi, a longstanding partnership with Hitachi and SaskPower.

Very recently, in fact this morning, the next iteration, the next

step in that relationship with Hitachi took place as we announced another carbon capture sequestration plant in the province where we're going to lead in that technology because of a partnership with Hitachi at Shand. And there'll be more on that later I'm sure, Mr. Speaker.

So to the consul general and to his wife Alicia, we want to say welcome to Saskatchewan and we want to thank them. Through them we want to thank the people of Japan for the great friendship and partnership that is ours. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition will want to join in that welcome, Mr. Speaker, to our guest to this Assembly today.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the official opposition, would like to extend special greetings to Mr. Susumu Fukuda and Alicia Fukuda, and especially to Mr. Victor Sawa and Dr. Lesley Sawa who are strong representatives of Japan here in Saskatchewan.

As a former member of the consular corps, I understand the great importance of the consul general of Japan in Saskatchewan because that person is always the head person for the consular corps in Saskatchewan and has done that for many years. That shows, I think, very much how we in Saskatchewan appreciate Japan.

I had the pleasure about a month ago of hosting four volleyball players from Japan in our home. And it was fascinating to figure out the Japanese and English connections, but it was more fascinating to understand how, when we talked about popular culture, the Japanese young people and Saskatchewan young people knew a lot of the very same things. So on an economic basis, we were very much pleased to be co-operating on all of the things that we do, but I think the exchange of our young people will further the generational friendship that we have. And so on that base, I'd like to say welcome very much.

I'd also like to bring special greetings to the Speaker of the House of Commons. And I think all of us are anxious to come and see your quarters that the Premier's talked about, so you can start lining up your visiting calendar for all of us who show up. Anyway, very good to have you here today. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, four residents of Regina seated in your gallery. From Regina South, a constituency I have the honour of representing, we have Gary and Donna Andrews. Give us a wave, folks. Thank you so much. And from the great constituency of Regina Wascana Plains, we have Richard and Iona Niebergall.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these good people are here today to watch the proceedings, and I told them I hope they get their money's worth. So I encourage all members to help me welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina

Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, seated in your gallery, I'm pleased to introduce a couple of guests that are here today. One, Janice Bernier who is, I guess, no stranger to many in this Assembly and in Regina. Janice has been a long-time labour leader. She had a career at SaskTel. She works in the film and music industry. She's the organizer of the annual dinner for the less fortunate, Mr. Speaker, and she also served as the NDP [New Democratic Party] candidate in Batoche in the past election.

Now Janice is joined by Peggy Hennig. Peggy is here on behalf of the United Way where she works, and certainly we'd like to recognize the good work of the United Way all across Saskatchewan and in our communities. I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in welcoming both of these community leaders to their Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this honoured Assembly, Elliott Bourgeault. Elliott is part of the Saskatchewan legislative internship program. I've been working with him for about six or seven weeks now. He had an opportunity to come up and do a little bit of a tour through our constituency, and I look forward to working with him the next few weeks until the end of the program for my part. So I would ask everyone here to join me in welcoming Elliott to his Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to join with the members and welcome Janice, Janice Bernier to the House, and we're glad to see her up in the balcony there yet. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the protection of late-night retail workers by passing Jimmy's law. And we know that in the early morning hours of June 20th, 2011, Jimmy Ray Wiebe was shot two times and died from his injuries. He was working at a gas station in Yorkton, alone and unprotected from intruders.

We also know that robberies, armed robberies such as the ones that took place in Regina on January 23rd, 24th, 2012 — and in fact one week ago tonight in Saskatoon in my riding, an armed robbery involving a shotgun — showed that Jimmy's law is needed to give workers added protection in the workplace. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately enact Bill 601, Jimmy's

law, to ensure greater safety for retail workers who work late-night hours.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from the city of Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the management of our finances and reporting of our finances. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party government to provide Saskatchewan people with a fair, true state of our finances by providing appropriate summary financial accounting and reporting that is in line with the rest of Canada in compliance with public sector accounting standards and following the independent Provincial Auditor's recommendations; and also to begin to provide responsible, sustainable, and trustworthy financial management as deserved by Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses.

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Regina and Maple Creek. I so submit.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting a petition today signed by people in Saskatchewan calling on the Sask Party government to support the seniors' bill of rights.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that many Saskatchewan seniors live on fixed incomes and are victims of physical, emotional, and financial abuse; that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to social and economic security and a right to live free from poverty; that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to enact a Saskatchewan seniors' bill of rights which would provide Saskatchewan seniors with social and economic security and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of trappers of Saskatchewan. The current

regulations being enforced are creating challenges that are a concern to our traditional trappers. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that the experience gained through practical experience be valued; and in so doing cause the government to review the current legislation and regulations with respect to trapping regulations and firearms use in consultation with the traditional resource users.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It's signed by many good trappers of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

2012 International Day of the Francophonie

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, March 20th, marks la journée internationale de la Francophonie [International Day of the Francophonie], an opportunity for us to celebrate the French language and the rich and diverse francophone culture here in Saskatchewan and in Canada, but it's also a chance to realize we are part of a much bigger community, la Francophonie du monde [the Francophonie of the world].

Je suis très fière de mes racines francophones. Mon arrière grand-oncle Napoléon Champagne était le premier francophone qui a servi comme le député provincial ici.

Mes deux grand-pères sont originaires du Québec, mais ils n'ont pas transmis leur langue à leur enfants une fois en Saskatchewan, une réalité qui, j'entends dire, est encore présente aujourd'hui. J'admets que je fais partie de la génération perdue. Mais parce que la communauté francophone, avec son accueil, avec le travail de son réseau associé provinciale, comme l'ACF [Assemblée communautaire francophone], c'est grâce à ce rayonnement que mes deux enfants feront partie de la génération retrouvée et la francophonie fera partie de leur identité culturelle.

Cette année, l'année des francophones et francophones, et aujourd'hui, la journée internationale de la francophonie, augmentera le sentiment de fierté et d'optimisme de la population francophone. C'est aussi une occasion pour le Saskatchewan de mieux faire connaître sa vitalité bilingue et multiculturelle.

[Translation: I am very proud of my francophone roots. My great grand-uncle, Napoléon Champagne, was the first francophone who served as a provincial member here.

My two grandfathers are originally from Quebec, but they didn't pass on their language to their children once in Saskatchewan, a reality that I hear is still present today. I admit that I am part of the lost generation. But because of the

Fransaskois community, with its welcome, with the work of its associated provincial network, like the ACF [Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise], it's thanks to this that my two children are part of the found generation and the fransaskoise are part of their cultural identity.

This year, the Year of the Fransaskois, and this day, the International Day of the Francophonie, increase the pride and the optimism of the Fransaskois population. It's also an occasion for Saskatchewan to better understand its bilingual and multicultural vitality.]

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in saying merci [thank you] to all those who have worked so hard and continue to do so to ensure a vibrant francophone culture continues to enrich the Saskatchewan in which we live.

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

Keeping Students Free from Tobacco

Mr. Makowsky: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, March 15th, I had the honour of revealing the winning ad selected by grade 6 to 12 students in a province-wide View and Vote 4 program at St. Marguerite Elementary School that's located in my constituency of Regina Dewdney. St. Marguerite grade 7 students were one of 300 classrooms who participated in this informative program from across the province.

As part of the Ministry of Health's tobacco reduction strategy, more than 6,000 students voted for an ad they felt would keep them from starting to use tobacco, or if they already used tobacco, the ad that made them think about quitting. Hearing students' thoughts about how the ads showed me that these students are getting the important message to stay tobacco free. Being a father of three young boys, this issue hits home for me as I want them to lead healthy, active, and tobacco-free lives.

I'm proud of what our government has done and continues to do in educating our youth on the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. In 2010 legislation was introduced banning smoking in vehicles with children under the age of 16; around doorways, windows, and air intakes of public buildings; and in all school grounds. The message to live tobacco free will reach more youth as the chosen ad will soon be shown in movie theatres throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing all the students who participated in the View and Vote 4 program. Thank you.

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

Unions of Regina Christmas Dinner

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 20th, 2011, the unions of Regina held their annual community Christmas dinner for Regina's less fortunate at the Delta Hotel. Sadly this dinner drew record crowds. These numbers demonstrate the vast needs that exist within our communities. Importantly, the Regina & District Labour Council with the

support of affiliate and non-affiliate unions, the Saskatchewan building trades, the CLC [Canadian Labour Congress], and the Delta Hotel stepped up to the plate once again and filled the need at least for one night.

I was pleased to work alongside these volunteers and specifically want to recognize Janice Bernier, the event coordinator, joined by the member from Regina Elphinstone as always there as well. This year over 1,500 people attended the event and both enjoyed and appreciated a full Christmas dinner. The children had games and small gifts and a visit with Santa.

We know that the holiday season is a time that can be incredibly stressful for individuals and families who are struggling financially, emotionally, and socially. The organizers of this event recognize this fact and have been able to come together once again to give generously.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in thanking all those who recognized the broader needs within our community and supported the 11th annual Unions of Regina Christmas Dinner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Delisle and District Fire Department's 100th Anniversary

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, on December 10th, 2011, I along with many other special guests attended an event celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Delisle and district fire department. The evening included letters of congratulations from Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Premier Brad Wall. Fire Chief Al Dreher made a special presentation to Dave Currie for his dedicated service of 34 years as fire chief of Delisle and district fire department.

In 1911 the fire department served only the town of Delisle. As of today, the department covers approximately 1,000 square kilometres for fire coverage and approximately 2,000 square kilometres for rescues. There are now three fire halls. The main hall is located in Delisle, with satellite halls at Pike Lake and Donovan. The department has 10 trucks and 50 members. In the last year, they responded to 127 call-outs. This includes fires, vehicle accidents, medical calls, search and rescue, and hazardous goods. The department also conducts fire inspections and have a fire prevention program that is presented to the four schools in their coverage area. Since the beginning of this program, fires started by children have significantly decreased.

The chief and members of the department are very proud of the growth and expertise of its members. Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join me in applauding the Delisle and district fire department on their many years of exceptional service. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Saskatoon Citizens of the Year

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday I had the opportunity to bring greetings on behalf of the Premier and our government at a luncheon in Saskatoon to

honour the winners of the CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Citizen of the Year Awards, Eleanor and Bill Edwards. Saskatchewan is known all around the world for our resource wealth, but we can all agree that one of Saskatchewan's greatest assets is the spirit and generosity of our people.

Mr. Speaker, the honour of being named Citizen of the Year represents the culmination of years of hard work and the dedication of Bill and Eleanor. This exceptional couple was raised in Saskatoon and has a long history of contributing to their city, not only through their business but by working tirelessly to support worthwhile groups and organizations.

Bill and Eleanor are well known for the generosity and sense of community. They have made significant contributions through their creation of bereavement organizations as well as coaching and volunteering with organizations such as Meals on Wheels. In addition, both have served with various hospital foundations and board committees to advance health care in Saskatoon.

I commend CTV on the excellent job they do in recognizing Saskatoon's outstanding citizens with this annual award. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Bill and Eleanor Edwards on this well-deserved award and thank them for the positive impact on the many lives they have touched. Thank you.

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

Estevan Citizen Honoured by Agricultural Graduates Association

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the accomplishments of Estevan constituent, Darald Marin. On January 7th, Mr. Marin was presented with an honorary life membership from the Saskatchewan Agricultural Graduates Association.

Since university graduation, Mr. Marin has grown and marketed seed, operated and owned custom seed plants, pursued the trend of paraplowing soils, and incorporated alfalfa into the crop rotation as well as marketing the product to the Pacific Rim and the United States. During the winter, he instructed farm management classes and offered consulting services from the farm office. Mr. Marin achieved national recognition in the 1980s for harvesting and selling kochia seed while co-operating with Agriculture Canada and the Saskatchewan Research Council. The Marin farm practised zero till for 30 years up until 2012.

Mr. Marin has been very active member of the Radville community, volunteering for many organizations, serving as alderman and mayor of the town of Radville, and had a large role in establishing the Long Creek Rodeo. Mr. Speaker, in addition to his many accomplishments, Mr. Marin is an avid historical artifacts collector and president of the Western Canada chapter 38 of the International Harvester Collectors Club.

Mr. Marin credits most of his success and that of his farming operation to the girl of his dreams: his wife, Marlene. I'd like to ask all my colleagues to join me in applauding the great achievements of Darald Marin.

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

Focus on Women Trade Show and Sale

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and talk about the 2012 Focus on Women Trade Show and Sale that took place this last weekend in Prince Albert. This annual event provided over 80 exhibitors an opportunity to demonstrate the latest in fashion and products to over 2,000 attendees. As women carry out professional work in business in our communities, we celebrate the role that women play in our history — in the economic, social, political, and cultural fabric of our country.

I was in attendance with the member from Prince Albert Northcote and enjoyed emceeding the event, as well as experiencing the energy and spirit expressed by business women of all ages. The trade show was a great gathering, allowing for a weekend of knowledge exchange, networking, and new products. Twenty-six years ago this event was initially organized by rural farm women to celebrate the achievements of women in the community and conduct an event specifically to recognize local women.

Saskatchewan volunteers are the best in the country, and I would like to thank all the committee members and volunteers for another successful year and a wonderful trade show. Please join me in applauding our outstanding women from every corner of the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Takeover of Grain Marketing Company

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, last week we asked some very important questions about the Viterra takeover deal. The Premier was flippant in his responses; he laughed and shrugged off the questions. But on Friday, when the Premier did get serious, he said:

An enhanced head office presence and more jobs in Saskatchewan would be a benefit to our province, both in terms of positive impact on the economy and on provincial revenues.

My question to the Premier: what is his definition of an enhanced head office presence? Does the deal announced today meet that definition?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question.

Obviously the news is out, and there is a proposal for a takeover, a friendly takeover of Viterra, which will now be subject to a national review under the Investment Canada guidelines as well as a potential review in terms of the competition issue.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the head office question, this is a concern and should be for the province of Saskatchewan when any Saskatchewan head office corporation is the target of a takeover. Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the member's question is, we're going to do the homework and find out exactly what this takeover means for the presence of the newco, of Glencore and the other two partners in the takeover.

We're going to do that homework, Mr. Speaker, as we do our evaluation of the deal. What we will use as our guidepost in this, Mr. Speaker, is the best interests of the province of Saskatchewan. That was the case 15 months ago, and it'll continue to be the case.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think the nature of my questions last week were: had the homework been done yet? We think that with the change to the Wheat Board, it was fairly obvious that things like this would happen.

The Premier said that the takeover of the Viterra would be reviewed as it relates to a net benefit to the province. And we know that net benefit relates to the economy, provincial revenues, and producers. This morning Richardson International, which is acquiring about \$900 million in Viterra assets, said current employees would be required to bid on their own jobs. My question to the Premier: what are his advisers telling him? Will there be a net increase in the number of jobs in Saskatchewan or a decrease?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The simple answer, Mr. Speaker, is that is not yet known. We know that over the last number of years, there has been some officers of the company of Viterra who have located in Calgary. Some of the officers from Winnipeg in Viterra's, the interests that Viterra had after a takeover involving Manitoba, a Manitoba company, have moved to Regina. But, Mr. Speaker, we know the company, Glencore, is indicating an interest in not having an office in Calgary. That would bode well for those jobs moving to Regina which they say will be their North American headquarters if this deal is indeed approved.

And, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the rest of the complement of corporate office positions, we do not know the answer to those questions yet. We have a team of senior officials in place led by a cabinet committee. We are going to engage outside sources if we feel we need to. And, Mr. Speaker, we will get the answers to those questions and will report them fully to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier supported the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board and experts have now shown that this is a direct cause of this particular takeover. The CEO [chief executive officer], Mayo Schmidt, at Viterra pointed out that the loss of the Wheat Board monopoly would mean 40 to \$50 million to the bottom line of Viterra. My advice

to the Premier is . . . What advice did he receive from the deputy minister of Agriculture with respect to the effect the dismantling of the single desk would have on companies like Viterra? And will he table that advice here in this Assembly?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, shortly after legislation was introduced in the House of Commons to change the Wheat Board . . . The Wheat Board still exists. The Wheat Board, if its claims are true that it has these 60,000 farmers to support it, will have a massive base of customers from which to build. They can also get in now to non-board grains.

But, Mr. Speaker, shortly after the legislation was tabled, there was an announcement specifically in relation to the Global Transportation Hub and a new resident at the Global Transportation Hub, which will be Alliance traders or a partnership formed thereof. And they're going to do what, Mr. Speaker? Because of the end of the monopoly, we're going to make pasta on the prairies where we grow all the durum — first time for a very, very long time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there'll be . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member on the backbench is saying, well did you see that coming? Well all of their questions last week were, why haven't you reacted to a deal that hasn't happened yet, Mr. Speaker. If the member has access to the amazing Kreskin, send him over.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental question about the competence of this government. It's been known for a long time, but at least from May last year, that the Wheat Board and the single desk were in jeopardy. It was changed; that happened. What advice did the Premier have? Would he table that for the people of Saskatchewan?

There are many questions, as the Premier has said here about this particular deal. There's questions about head office jobs but more importantly there are questions about what happens to all the jobs in rural Saskatchewan. So my question to the Premier is: when it looks like this deal will be more beneficial to Winnipeg and to Calgary, what will he be doing to defend Saskatchewan's interests?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — While the Wheat Board had its monopoly in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker, while it was by that monopoly preventing important value-added projects for board grains, Mr. Speaker, there were takeovers that occurred. The Wheat Pool became a publicly traded company under the watch of the NDP. That particular publicly traded company did what? They took over other grain companies, and they did that, Mr. Speaker, amazingly, while the monopoly of the Wheat Board existed.

Mr. Speaker, the member ends his question with, what are you going to do to protect the interests of the province? Well, Mr. Speaker, we will not follow their example. Because in October of 2010, they released their plan for potash. You remember the takeover 15 months ago, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible] . . . And they say this: "The plan for potash the NDP released, which lays out, in no uncertain terms, demands and conditions to be placed on any foreign corporation ultimately given the right to mine in the

province.” In other words, Mr. Speaker, they gave up on the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. They gave up on Saskatchewan’s interest. That’s not going to happen on this side of the House.

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

Sale of Television Network

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2010 this government sold off the Saskatchewan Communications Network for \$350,000 to a company called Bluepoint Investment. This was despite the physical assets and film and video library being valued at close to \$4 million. Now that we hear, now we hear that Bluepoint is flipping the company to Rogers Communications for about \$3 million, a far cry from the 350,000 the government accepted when they sold off SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network].

Bluepoint seems to be maximizing profits for its owners. I wonder why in 2010 the government didn’t maximize profits for its shareholders, the people of Saskatchewan. To the minister: in light of Rogers’s recent bid to buy SCN for \$3 million, does he think the people of Saskatchewan got a fair price for their public broadcaster when it was sold off for only \$350,000?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — We thank the member for her question, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, two of the more important challenges facing the film industry and television industry were access to capital to fund production and adapting to the new digital technology. We helped resolve both of these issues through the sale of SCN to Bluepoint Investment. In their agreement, Bluepoint committed to continue direct investment in Saskatchewan productions, but they also committed to provide future funding to promote digital production in our province so Saskatchewan filmmakers and video artists can reach world audiences through the new electronic media.

Now I actually had the opportunity to meet with Bluepoint and Rogers Communications late last year, and I learned that these two companies have signed an affiliation agreement. Under the agreement, Rogers assumed responsibility for programming in January and has brought Citytv to Saskatchewan, a first for our province. In addition to bringing a major new company to our province and new viewing opportunities to Saskatchewan residents, the deal also provides opportunities for a national audience to see what we’re doing here in Saskatchewan. This is a major step forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, for the sale of, for the sale to be finalized, the CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] needs to approve the purchase of SCN by Rogers. One of the commitments which the minister spoke to, attached to SCN, is to spend 2.75 million on Saskatchewan productions — independent and digital. In

fact the minister made that commitment in a June 2010 news release. I’d like to quote:

Along with buying the assets there is also a commitment to buy new Saskatchewan programming content that will support the film industry and to develop digital content. This proposal is the best value for taxpayer dollars.

To the minister: you sold off a Crown corporation at fire sale prices. Do you think it’s now the best value for Saskatchewan taxpayers to get our fill of American and downtown Toronto television on SCN — which was once the pride of the province, filled with Saskatchewan content?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. As we said before, there were important challenges facing Saskatchewan’s film and television industries, including access to capital and adapting to new digital technology.

SCN’s sale to Bluepoint Investment helps resolve those issues and, as I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, in their agreement Bluepoint committed to continue direct investment in Saskatchewan productions and to provide funding for digital transformation, key to Saskatchewan video and filmmakers reaching the worldwide audience that exists today.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with Bluepoint and the Rogers Communications people last year — it was in December, as I recall — and we learned that the new companies have in fact signed an affiliation agreement under which Rogers has assumed responsibility for programming. That took place in January, as viewers will know, and that has brought Citytv to Saskatchewan, a brand new viewing opportunity with a national company here in Saskatchewan. We think that’s good progress, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentioned Bluepoint’s commitment to purchasing local productions, but he didn’t mention that Rogers has been asked to be relieved of that commitment, Mr. Speaker. The minister cannot remain silent about Rogers’s request to relieve itself of this commitment to purchase Saskatchewan productions. The government made that commitment less than two years ago. That was what the sale was premised on, Mr. Speaker, or perhaps this was an empty promise.

To the minister: will he finally stand up — really stand up — for Saskatchewan interests and not just say the right thing but do the right thing and ask the CRTC to maintain Bluepoint’s contractual commitment to local production for the new owner, Rogers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before,

it's a major step forward for Saskatchewan to draw a national company like Rogers Communications and the new viewing opportunities that they provide to Saskatchewan residents. We will certainly continue to have discussions with the company, and any commitments that have been made will need to be honoured, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Dementia Patients and Their Caregivers

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, health care spending accounted for about 42 per cent of the budget. So on the eve of another budget, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that people are wondering what's in store for health care.

In Saskatchewan, there are over 18,000 people in the province who are currently living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. To put that in perspective, Mr. Speaker, that means for the populations of Yorkton or Swift Current, you'd need to add about 2,500 people in order to match the number of people in Saskatchewan living with dementia, and that number's increasing. Every 24 hours, Mr. Speaker, 10 more people develop a form of dementia. My question to the minister: does he agree that the dementia epidemic in Saskatchewan is serious, that it requires attention, and will we see action in tomorrow's budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the members opposite, and particularly that member, is waiting anxiously — one more sleep — until the Finance minister rises in his place and delivers another balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, something that we didn't see under the NDP, but it was a certainly a balanced budget under this Finance minister.

Mr. Speaker, as far as particular programs such as Alzheimer's and dementia, we know the impact that that has in our province. It's a serious impact. I have met on a regular basis, annually for sure, with the Alzheimer's Society to look at some of their proposals and what they would like to see done in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We do know that to care for individuals suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's takes special training, and many are in our long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker. We try and supply the best facilities and staff that we can to take care of those individuals, Mr. Speaker. That's why we worked very hard in our first year to make sure that we've got the proper complement — some 800 more nurses hired in the province, Mr. Speaker. It certainly wasn't done under the previous government. Not to say that there isn't more work to do, Mr. Speaker, but we will see in the upcoming budget as to how the Health budget rolls out.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those on the front lines have identified that support for caregivers, care workers,

needs to be a priority. According to experts, when caregivers have the appropriate resources that they need, Mr. Speaker, on average they're able to keep their loved ones out of long-term care facilities an average of 557 days longer than those who do not have the support.

We know in the Throne Speech last fall, Mr. Speaker, when the Sask Party delivered their Throne Speech, there was no real mention of additional support for respite care for caregivers, or additional support for the Alzheimer's Society's First Link program.

Now we know, Mr. Speaker, they're certainly not bound to what is in their Throne Speech because we have seen them come forward and introduce three new politicians for the province, an expense that will cost millions and millions of extra dollars here in Saskatchewan.

To the minister: the caregivers of those people that are helping individuals with Alzheimer's do not want more politicians in the province; they want additional supports. My question to the minister: will there be additional supports for caregivers, for respite care, and for the First Link program of the Alzheimer's Society?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous question, we're working hard to make sure that proper facilities are there for people that they can age in place, like an Amicus, Mr. Speaker. They're dead set against it.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll take no advice from that member or that party opposite, especially on following commitments, Mr. Speaker. In the last provincial election, those members had the nerve to promise \$550 million of spending in health care — not 1 cent for Alzheimer's.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the supports that caregivers are asking for is to ensure that people can stay in their homes longer and not have the reliance on long-term care facilities in the same way. What it comes down to is common sense in spending as opposed to short-sighted decisions.

Other governments in the country have recognized the importance of this, Mr. Speaker. In Manitoba, the provincial government has given \$550,000 to the Alzheimer Society's First Link program which supports people with dementia, their family members, and caregivers. British Columbia, Mr. Speaker, gave \$1 million to the Alzheimer Society for this issue. Yet in Saskatchewan this government is giving just \$50,000 per year for similar initiatives. It's not even a drop in the bucket, Mr. Speaker, when we consider that for every individual that can stay out of a long-term care facility there's an annual savings of about \$75,000.

My question to the minister: when will this government take this seriously and start catching up to other provinces and do what's right for caregivers here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, year over year we've seen the budget in this province for health care continue to increase, dealing with many, many of the aspects and diseases that people suffer. Alzheimer's is one of them, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've strengthened home care in this province so people can live at their home longer, supported as long as possible. That's why we're repairing long-term care facilities so that if they can't live in their home any longer, they have a proper facility to go into, replacing 13 across the province as well as one in Saskatoon, Amicus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're moving those steps forward as we move forward with the growing province, Mr. Speaker. But once again, Mr. Speaker, I find it ringing awfully hollow from those members opposite that could promise everything that they could imagine in health care in the last campaign, but they didn't say one word about Alzheimer's, and now he's got the nerve to raise it here.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Plans for Highways Ministry

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Maintaining our highways and roads is crucial in keeping our families safe. But the people who do the highway maintenance work are worried, Mr. Speaker. This Premier's talk about austerity leaves these workers wondering what job cuts are in store in tomorrow's budget. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because the Saskatchewan Party government hasn't filled 95 positions in the last year, and it's close to 200 positions that have been left unfilled in Highways over the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure this Assembly that he'll stand up for his staff in tomorrow's budget to ensure that there are no more cuts to Highways staff? Will he do that, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when this government took office a little over four years ago, we faced a massive infrastructure deficit in health care and education, but it was especially noticeable in highways, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over the term of the last four years, while in the 2007 election we promised \$1.8 billion in highway spending, we actually exceeded that. We spent \$2.2 billion on highways spending. Mr. Speaker, during the recent campaign, I was with our Premier when he announced our plans for this term. Mr. Speaker, again, \$2.2 billion in the upcoming four years.

Mr. Speaker, we have no apologies to make for what we've done under Highways compared to the members opposite. We ramped up spending enormously, and as far as cuts or anything in tomorrow's budget, Mr. Speaker, that member's just going to have to wait one more night. The announcements will be made

tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, last year this government left three fewer communities without maintenance shops or staff. Saskatchewan needs our staff to be working across the province to keep our roads as safe as possible for all of us, Mr. Speaker. Without a local maintenance shop or employees to do the job, there is more potential for dangerous roads that threaten our family and our industry. My question to the minister: which communities are on the chopping block for shutdowns of their maintenance centres in tomorrow's budget?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe the member opposite didn't hear me. Over the last four years this government has increased highways spending. We have a massive infrastructure deficit, Mr. Speaker. We've done an awful lot of highways work. We recognize there's an awful lot left to do. There's no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite left behind some deplorable conditions in highways all over the province.

Mr. Speaker, highways are priority for this government. And the member opposite doesn't seem to realize but, Mr. Speaker, the budget announcements will come tomorrow and he's just going to have wait like everybody else to get that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan didn't vote for further cuts to our Highways staff. They didn't vote for shutdown of service centres as they realized it could lead to dangerous road conditions, Mr. Speaker. They certainly didn't vote to have more politicians, when the trade-off is services for Saskatchewan people such as safe roads for our families and industry, Mr. Speaker. That does not lead to responsible growth.

There are many questions behind the motivations for this action. Is this the minister's first step towards the privatization of highways maintenance in the province of Saskatchewan?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The goal of this government as far as highways go, Mr. Speaker, is twofold really. First of all, we need to fix a lot of highways that were left in deplorable condition by the members opposite. Second, the economy is growing, Mr. Speaker. We have more population. We have more businesses moving to this province. The economy is as sound as it's ever been. Mr. Speaker, that creates demands. That creates things that the members opposite never envisioned. That creates demands for things like bypasses. That creates demands for things like interchanges. Mr. Speaker, we're working very hard to meet those demands.

As far as the member opposite worried about what's going to happen under the Highways tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, he's just going to have to wait for tomorrow's budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, he speaks about \$2.2 billion in highways spending. Where are the staff to maintain the road, Mr. Speaker? Two hundred people less in the Highways staff. But let me recap for the public. We're advocating for safe roads for our family and for industry. That is responsible growth, Mr. Speaker. What the Sask Party's advocating for, what are they advocating for? More politicians and fewer Highways workers, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister at least assure this House that the three new MLAs that he's fighting for, that he's lobbying for, can at least drive a snowplow unit or maintain a gravel truck or have some engineering skills to cover for the staff that he's refusing to hire on? Will he do that, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I don't know where to start. That member was a former Highways minister, Mr. Speaker, and under his watch they did virtually nothing through 16 years. Mr. Speaker, in his long, rambling question, one of the points he made, Mr. Speaker, was he said that the members opposite were advocating for industry. That seems kind of ironic because I've never heard the members opposite ever advocate anything for industry or business in this province, ever. They chased businesses out of this province, Mr. Speaker.

And as far as his comment about the citizens in the election not voting for more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I'll tell you what the citizens didn't vote for, Mr. Speaker. They obviously voted for less NDP MLAs.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Carbon Capture Test Facility in Southeast Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in your Assembly today to tell you and the citizens of this province about an important initiative being undertaken by our provincial government through SaskPower in co-operation and partnership with Hitachi. In fact, I'd like to pay particular attention and mention Mr. Fujitani who was present at the announcement this morning, as well as Tom Kishchuk, who runs Hitachi's operations here in Saskatoon.

This initiative, Mr. Speaker, that we announced this morning, highlights three key aspects that are noteworthy for citizens: first, the efforts of SaskPower to become a world leader in the field of clean coal electrical generation; second, our plans to put a sound foundation in place to support the province's growing economy for years to come through SaskPower; and third, to

reinforce the significance of partnerships between SaskPower and key private sector companies from across Canada and around the world.

It was my honour to be in Saskatoon this morning to announce that SaskPower is partnering with Hitachi to construct a \$60 million carbon capture test facility adjacent to the Shand power station in southeast Saskatchewan. SaskPower and Hitachi will each contribute approximately \$30 million, with SaskPower acting as the owner/operator of the facility. Construction will begin later this year or early in 2013 with a scheduled completion date of the summer of 2014.

Mr. Speaker, this major investment in carbon capture research technology will help to ensure that SaskPower can fulfill its mandate of providing reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity to the province of Saskatchewan — the province of Saskatchewan which is going through record growth. Providing a test facility for these advanced technologies means Saskatchewan will remain a world leader when it comes to carbon capture. It also supports Hitachi's substantial manufacturing capacity right here in Saskatchewan.

Joining with Hitachi on this test facility continues a long-standing partnership between SaskPower and Hitachi that dates back more than 40 years. In 1970, Hitachi supplied a steam turbine for SaskPower's Queen Elizabeth power station in Saskatoon. This was the first Hitachi turbine ever installed in North America.

SaskPower will be able to use the knowledge gained from this facility as the corporation proceeds with the development of the \$1.24 billion Boundary dam integrated carbon capture and storage demonstration project in Estevan. Ensuring that carbon capture is a viable option for SaskPower is crucial to the people of this province. Over the next 20 years SaskPower must rebuild, replace, or acquire more than 3700 megawatts of generating capacity. That's about the amount of generating capacity that's in the system today.

What we do know is that, under this government, coal-fired generation will be a vital component in meeting that challenge for the foreseeable decades. Mr. Speaker, we're going to do that by cleaning up coal. Mr. Speaker, today's announcement is great news for our province's already strong economy, and especially the communities in the Southeast. It will continue to position Saskatchewan as being home to world-class applied research and innovation and that this government, through SaskPower, has a bold plan to ensure that we continue with our growth agenda. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to just offer a couple of comments on behalf of the official opposition. I thank the minister for providing the statement here today in advance of question period.

Certainly I'd like to recognize the great work of Hitachi in Saskatchewan, that long history of manufacturing, of employment, and of technology that they've utilized both in our province and around the world. The minister referenced some

of that relationship and some of that history which does go back more than a few decades — 40 years or so — to the Queen Elizabeth power station and a steam turbine, but it's continued since then and they've been very involved in power generation in this province and beyond our borders for many, many years, including the wind power projects over the past decade, certainly under New Democratic government.

So I'd like to thank Hitachi for the role that they're playing and that they're fulfilling and as it relates to new technologies. As it relates to the important mandate of SaskPower that the minister's entrusted of providing affordable, safe, reliable, environmentally sustainable, and responsible power to the people of the province, we are concerned with respect to plans or lacking plans on this front. But there's certainly opportunities for questions as we move forward. There is a significant challenge for SaskPower in meeting these challenges and we need to make sure that there is a clear plan to be able to do so.

As it relates to the carbon capture test facility, certainly we look forward to learning more about this project. It's always nice for Saskatchewan to be able to showcase and take a lead role in advancing technologies. It's been part of our history here in this province to do so, and it's something that's important for us to continue. We want to make sure that we're analyzing the value for dollar on a project like this and making sure that it's in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. Certainly we'll be doing that.

As it relates to the clean coal project that was mentioned by the minister, this has potentially very significant benefits for Canada as a whole, certainly for Saskatchewan but really the world as a whole, and holds out some promise, some significant promise. What we would urge, and what we have urged all the way along, is that the burden of \$1 billion for this test project on the backs of Saskatchewan utility ratepayers, families, and businesses is a heavy burden to carry. And it's been disappointing to date to see the hundreds of millions of dollars bypass Saskatchewan into Alberta to drive technologies and projects there when realistically this is such an important project that's not only important to Saskatchewan but to Canada as a whole. And we'd like to certainly see the federal government play a broader role in that project than they are.

Mr. Speaker, that's all the comments I have for now. Certainly we have important tasks before us here in Saskatchewan in providing affordable, safe, reliable, environmentally sustainable and responsible power to the people of the province, and we'll be working hard to make sure that the best interests of Saskatchewan people are represented on that front. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — What is the Opposition House Leader's point of order?

[14:30]

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During

question period in the exchange between the member from Saskatoon Massey Place and the Minister of Health, the Minister of Health said something that he should know was not in fact true.

In referring to NDP platform from the last campaign, he'd said that there was no discussion of Alzheimer's in the platform. That is patently untrue, Mr. Speaker. And on page seven of that platform, it's there for all to see. I'd ask for the Speaker to rule on that, please.

The Speaker: — I will take that under advisement and take a look at *Hansard* and come back with a decision.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 36

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 36 — *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon after question period and a ministerial statement to start off our afternoon of adjourned debates on an issue that has a great amount of importance and relevance to all Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, it's an important issue because it talks about our democratic system and it's a piece of legislation that addresses how in fact we conduct elections, how we organize ourselves as a provincial government with respect to the electoral process and addresses a number of important issues. I think, Mr. Speaker, it's also very important to have this discussion because it cuts to, it cuts to an issue that I think is also very important when we look at the record of a government and what they say publicly and then what they do once they're in a position to do something out of their own self-interest.

For those at home, the piece of legislation I'm speaking about is Bill No. 36, *An Act to amend the Constituency Boundaries Act*. The piece of legislation itself is not especially long. Bill No. 36 is really just a one-page document, along with the title page of course, and then a couple pages of explanatory notes which explain the changes that are brought forward. So as it's stated with Bill No. 36, the short title is "This Act may be cited as *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011*" and it goes on to say it will be amended in this, "in the manner set forth in this Act".

Section 2 is amended and it says:

Clause 2(k) is amended by adding "that is 18 years of age or older" **after** [the phrase] "total population of Saskatchewan".

Subsection 3.2 is amended by adding “total” before “population”.

[And section 12 is amended.] **Clause 12.2(b) is amended by striking out “56” and substituting “59”.**

And then there's another subsection, Mr. Speaker, that talks about how the population quotient is to be calculated in accordance with the following formula. And then also there's a component, Mr. Speaker, that talks of the transitional commission to prepare reports based on amendments and it says:

7 Notwithstanding any provision of *The Constituency Boundaries Act, 1993*, if a Constituency Boundaries Commission has been established pursuant to that Act before the coming into force of this Act, the Constituency Boundaries Commission shall prepare its interim and final reports based on the amendments made by this Act.

And then section 8, coming into force on assent.

So I give . . . I don't normally read the actual piece of legislation when I'm in adjourned debate, but I wanted to read it this time, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's a good lesson for all legislators and people in Saskatchewan as well. While the text of the piece of legislation may not be that extensive, while the changes, Mr. Speaker, put forward in this piece of legislation, Bill No. 36, may not seem that significant or having a huge impact on things just by the actual words, if you dig a little deeper I think it tells a very different story.

So I'd like to talk about a couple of different aspects of this piece of legislation. The first is the change with respect to how the numbers that form a constituency would be calculated. To date, Mr. Speaker, the approach has been to use all people. What members opposite here are now suggesting with this amendment is that the calculation will be done based on people that are voting age, 18 years and older.

I've had colleagues on my side of the House who had the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation. They've identified a few concerns from our perspective with this approach that members opposite are seeking to take. The one component, Mr. Speaker, is that we as legislators, when we're elected, we do so in order to represent the entire population of our constituency. And the concerns that we hear, Mr. Speaker, come from young and old. The 18 year age cut-off in no way is a cut-off of the issues that confront us as MLAs.

I can think of different phone calls and case work and constituents that have come into the office, and many times it's been someone who's not 18 years of age or the issue that's being brought forward by a concerned family member or a neighbour or a parent, a grandparent is affecting an individual who is a minor not yet eligible to vote. I can think of issues that deal with the school system. I can think of issues of protective services. I can think of any number of concerns.

Here in the legislature, we often talk about the future generations. We talk about the need to keep in mind the best interest of generations to come. And, Mr. Speaker, I think by excluding these individuals who are under 18 from the

calculation, I think it rules out on paper something that we should certainly not be doing in our own mindsets. And I think it's important to show that we take the role of young people and the concerns of young people very seriously. It's important that we take the priorities seriously. And we can do that, Mr. Speaker, by including them in the calculation for constituency populations, and I think that is a very important point to make.

I've had other colleagues make this point, Mr. Speaker. We often are fortunate enough to have school groups come to the Assembly and, as all members have had — most members, perhaps maybe not some of the new members haven't yet had the chance for a school group to come — but it honestly is one of the highlights of a session because it allows for that interaction with young people. And they are able to see what is a snapshot of what occurs in this building. We hope that the snapshot is encouraging most of the time. And I think it's also important for the young people because it gives them a chance to understand who their elected representative is, that they're a real person; if they have concerns, that they're there to listen and they're there to work for their constituents.

And for myself, whether it's school groups coming from Dundonald or Bishop Klein, I think of two school groups that regularly come, or St. Peter's that has been here, wherever the group is coming from, Mr. Speaker, it's always a highlight because it's an opportunity to connect with those young people.

And young people, while it would not always be indicated in voter turnout, young people are really engaged and concerned about the future of our province, of our country, and our democracy. And perhaps not every young person is getting involved in formalized political routes and campaigns as we might like, but I think the interest is there and many are choosing to get involved. I know members opposite can relate to this as well. Often when those school groups come to the Assembly, it's often . . . Sometimes it's a follow-up conversation from a door knocking experience at their house. And they'll say, oh, I recognize you. I remember when you came to our house and we were on the driveway playing basketball and you talked to us. And to young people, this issue stands out for them, and they remember their interaction with an MLA.

And so that's why I think it's so important that young people come here to the Assembly to get a bit of a snapshot of what occurs here and to, yes, see some of the tradition and some of the theatre that is involved with everything that we do here in the Assembly but also to understand the historical nature, the role of the Assembly, and how they are able to take on an active role should they choose to go down that path, whether it is simply knowing who their MLA is so that they can send an email if they have a concern or whether it's actually getting involved in a political party, whatever political party that may be.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, by excluding those young people from the calculation that occurs with the setting of the populations for constituencies, I think that's a step in the wrong direction. I think it's better to incorporate those young people because it shows that we take their concerns, we take their views seriously, that we are in fact listening to them, that we are taking into account their priorities and, Mr. Speaker, that we

are doing our best to set up a system that is responsive to them.

I think that's especially the case, Mr. Speaker, in regions of the province or cities or towns where there isn't a very large young population. To exclude those people from, all those young people from the calculation, I think that is a step in the wrong direction. I don't think that is appropriate. And I think the statements that members will make, especially on the other side that, welcome to your Legislative Assembly, I think those comments really will lack meaning and lack a true reflection of what is going on in the Assembly if this legislation goes forward and is changed as it is suggested by members opposite, by the Sask Party government.

The next component, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to talk about in this legislation, having spoken about some of my concerns with having the calculation for boundaries to be determined by those that are only 18 and over, and that, Mr. Speaker, has to do with an increase to the number of politicians in the Assembly, the number of MLAs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I was elected to my second term in this last election, so I have not served as long as some members in the Assembly that go back to 1986 or go back to '91 or whatever the year may be, 2003, whenever the election occurred. But I have been around now, Mr. Speaker, and gone through two elections as a candidate. And in between elections, for me, it's always been a big priority to do a lot of door knocking over the summers. I always try to, over the summer, to do a very large chunk of my constituency so that I am in fact connecting with individuals, hearing from them, and making it known that I'm there to help if they have a concern or a problem. And I'm also hearing what their concerns and their priorities are.

Mr. Speaker, I have not knocked on as many doors as some, but I have knocked on thousands and thousands of doorsteps, knocked on thousands of doors at thousands of doorsteps. I have never ever, Mr. Speaker, heard of a constituent saying, we need to increase the number of politicians in the legislature. I've never heard them say it about the number of civic councillors that may be in this city. I haven't heard them talk about it as the number of members of parliament, and I most certainly have never heard them speak about it with respect to the number of politicians here in the provincial Assembly. I have never heard a constituent come to me and say, I think that we should increase the number of politicians in the Assembly; I think that is a smart idea.

So, Mr. Speaker, where our members opposite got this idea, it's certainly not from the voters. And, Mr. Speaker, you never know who's behind the doorstep. You don't know if they're a traditional NDP supporter, if they're a traditional Conservative or Sask Party supporter, if they're a traditional Liberal or Green Party, an independent. You never know who's behind the door, Mr. Speaker, but whatever the political stripe of the individual at the door, I have never ever had them say to me, we should have more politicians in the Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, perhaps members opposite have had this experience, perhaps on coffee row in the towns of their constituencies or in the malls in their constituencies if they're in an urban setting, wherever they're coming into regular contact

with voters — whether it's at church, whether it's at the ball diamond, the hockey rink — perhaps they've had people come up to them and say, we could increase, we ought to as a province, increase the number of politicians, the number of MLAs. But I don't think so. It would be a head scratcher to me. It would be a huge surprise to me, Mr. Speaker, if members opposite were having tons of people come up to them and say that they should increase the number of politicians.

Now if members opposite have specific examples and specific stories of individuals coming up to them and if they would like to bring all these people to the legislature and fill the galleries, they're entitled to do that, and I would find that interesting. But, Mr. Speaker, I kind of think it's not going to happen because I don't really think those people are out there.

Perhaps members opposite have had this experience. But based on my experience and from talking with colleagues and, well, even having conversations with Sask Party members, this has never been something that's been brought up. Because sometimes, while members — not members, but members of the public — while citizens out in Saskatchewan might think that we only go head-to-head in the Assembly in an adversarial nature, those that have had a bit more exposure to the Assembly do realize that from time to time members of the government and opposition will have a productive conversation, either behind the bar or at a reception, in the hallway, in the parking lot. These types of conversations take place.

But, Mr. Speaker, in all my . . . And sometimes in these conversations, issues of importance are brought up because, while there is a role and it's appropriate and necessary for ideas to be brought forward in legislation, sometimes when an idea's percolating or an idea is sort of gaining steam, Mr. Speaker, getting some momentum, there'll be discussions between members on both sides of the House saying, well, you know, I think we need to consider this. And sometimes there'll be some discussions made between House leaders perhaps. There'll be different opportunities for members opposite to convey and say, hey, according to my constituents, it's really important that this happens. It's really important that we have support on both sides of the House for this initiative because this initiative is really important for the well-being of the province.

[14:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, I haven't had those conversations with members opposite. There hasn't been a member opposite who's come to me in the hallway, at a reception, behind the bar and said, you know what? The burning issue in my constituency that people really want are more MLAs. My constituents came to me overwhelmingly, especially during the last election, every doorstep I went to, they came to me and said, you know what? We need to add seats to the legislature. We need to increase the number of politicians in the province, and I think that should be something we should work together on. It'd be a real priority for Saskatchewan people. We should do this.

Mr. Speaker, I'm in no way, I'm in no way belittling, demeaning, or minimizing the importance and the significance and relevance of MLAs and the role that legislators play in the province. I think it is a noble calling. I think members on both sides of the House for the most part engage in the political

pursuits because they believe in what they're doing. They want to make things better for their communities. They want to improve the situation for their constituents, for their families, for future generations. We have very different views on how that ought to occur. What is the best path for doing that? We have different views on politics. That's a given, and that's what makes our Westminster adversarial system strong and good.

But, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that this is a priority, adding the number of politicians to the Assembly, and that there's a groundswell of support and activity out in Saskatchewan — whether it's in a big city, a medium-size city, a small town, a village, the farm, wherever it may be, out on the trapline — Mr. Speaker, to suggest that these people want more politicians and more MLAs added to the Assembly simply is not believable because I have never heard it, Mr. Speaker. I've never had a member opposite come to me and say, my constituents really want to increase the number of legislators in the province; we need to up the number of seats in the Assembly. I have never had that conversation, Mr. Speaker.

I have never in my office received a phone call . . . Sometimes you get random calls from people, sometimes in your constituency, sometimes from another part of the province. They just want to pass on advice. They want to pass on a view. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, those calls are supportive. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, those calls are a bit more critical. That's fine. That's what being an elected person means. It means listening to both sides and taking whatever is said, whatever is written. But I have never had a person call me up, Mr. Speaker, and say that we ought to have more MLAs in the Assembly.

So I feel I have made my point with respect to the fact that I don't think anyone in the province is calling for more MLAs, more politicians in the Assembly. I simply don't think it is the case. So my question is, if members opposite are coming forward with this piece of legislation, where is the idea coming from? What is the motivation for this idea? Why do they want to do this idea?

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . And you would think also, Mr. Speaker, if it was something that they had been willing and something that they had wanted to be open about, wanted to be upfront with Saskatchewan people, they had opportunities to talk about it, Mr. Speaker. They had different chances to bring this up. They had different venues to do so.

The one option, Mr. Speaker, I will think of is the Throne Speech in the fall. Well let's back up one step. First of all, Mr. Speaker, they could have talked about this in the election. That was an opportunity for members opposite to talk about their desire and their willingness to increase the number of MLAs in the Assembly. That would have been one chance and one opportunity where members opposite could have said, you know what? They could have said, we've heard from a lot of Saskatchewan people. Our phones have been ringing off the hook. Our email inboxes are right full. Every time I go to coffee row, there is four or five individuals coming up to me and saying, we need to increase the number of MLAs; we need to increase the number of politicians in the House. If that's what members opposite . . . If that's what every Sask Party candidate and MLA had been hearing during the election, well then, Mr.

Speaker, they could have put it in their platform. They could have talked about it. They could have said, we think this is a good idea.

And, Mr. Speaker, I may not agree with the rationale, I may not agree with the need, but it would have been an opportunity. It would have been a chance for members opposite to clearly go on the record and to state that we think there should be more politicians in the Assembly, and we're going to add more politicians to the legislature. We think Saskatchewan people, the province of Saskatchewan needs more elected representatives. That could have been their approach. That is what they could have said. That is what they could have done, if in fact Saskatchewan people were ringing their phones off the hook, were sending them tons of email, and were going to them at different venues in the community saying that this is a priority.

Well they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker, because no one was asking for it. They didn't do that because no one has an interest in having more politicians added to the Assembly. They didn't do that, Mr. Speaker, because Saskatchewan people have other priorities; they have other concerns.

The one example that I gave today, Mr. Speaker, that I talked about in question period, was the increase in funding and the increase of importance that people in the public want this government to place on providing home care, respite care, and support through the Alzheimer's societies for assisting those that are living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. There's huge evidence, Mr. Speaker, that if we're able to help people stay in their homes longer, if we're able to provide that assistance, it allows individuals . . . Well if you provide supports, it allows families to keep people out of long-term care facilities, and we know that that is a huge savings. And we know for about each year that someone is able to be in the home and not in a long-term care facility, that's a savings of about \$75,000.

Well members opposite may say, well in the grand scheme of things, you know, three more MLAs, that's not a huge expenditure in the scheme of the provincial budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you take the amount for those MLAs each year, if you take that amount and extend it over a term, that's millions and millions of dollars. That is a lot of money.

So when you're dealing with someone who needs a little bit of assistance, needs a bit of help to stay in, to keep their loved one in their home, they need a little bit of support, a bit of financial assistance or supports — it's not up to me to say what kind of support that is — but to have the additional supports there, to them, Mr. Speaker, I would think it would seem rather bizarre that members opposite would choose to spend millions on more politicians and MLAs but not be willing to provide a little bit of support to allow a loved one to stay in their home a little bit longer.

And it's not only for the benefit of the family and for that person, Mr. Speaker. It actually makes good sense financially. There's an economic argument for it because if we can keep individuals out of long-term care facilities, that reduces the burden. It keeps us out of the situations of having to pay additional amounts to have someone in a long-term care

facility. So it makes sense. And the example, Mr. Speaker, that I gave for additional supports for people with Alzheimer's or individuals living with a form of dementia, families working through this, that's one example. Every member in this Assembly when they think of their constituents or think of their own family situation can think of examples where it makes so much more sense to spend additional millions of dollars as opposed to increasing the number of MLAs in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, I've made a case here based on my views that it's not appropriate to exclude those that are under 18 from the calculations for determining populations for constituencies. I don't think that's respectful to . . . or I don't think it's a wise approach. I don't think it sends the correct and the proper signal to young people in our province.

And, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of adding more MLAs, I'm puzzled why members opposite haven't been talking about this if this was such a priority or is a priority that Saskatchewan people have brought to their attention. And I've talked about the election. I've talked about how on doorsteps, on public venues — whether it's at a rink or a ball diamond or coffee row — they've had many opportunities to say that individuals have come to them to discuss this idea. Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't in the election platform. It hasn't been brought up with me by members opposite in any venue other than this piece of legislation.

So I kind of doubt . . . And I think, you know, for any of the new members who are sitting on the backbenches who are figuring things out, so to speak, with respect to how their caucus works and how legislation comes forward, I think they need to start asking some questions, Mr. Speaker, and ask, where did this idea come from? Because they can go to whoever is the mastermind within cabinet or within the inner circle who has come up with this genius idea as they would see it, that we need to add more MLAs, more politicians to the Assembly, and I think some of those backbenchers need to ask some questions to those people and say, where did this idea come from? Are you serious? I have never, ever heard about this issue from a constituent. Because I think if they were upfront, if they were honest and open with the people that are really pushing this within the inner circle, I think it would be a conversation worth having among those members . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Moose Jaw, Moose Jaw North, says, you just can't get used to growth.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about some of the numbers with respect to populations. And the member from Moose Jaw North is very eager to enter into debate. He often enters into debate during question period. And I really do hope that he makes his way into cabinet, Mr. Speaker, because it's a shame that Moose Jaw hasn't had a cabinet minister under the Sask Party government, and I know that the member from Moose Jaw North brings a tremendous amount to the table and would be a fine addition to cabinet. And perhaps with the shuffle coming up in the spring, I would be shocked, Mr. Speaker, if the member from Moose Jaw North didn't make it into cabinet given his experience. But that's a different speech for another day perhaps, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at . . . You know, there's been additional people who have spoken about this idea, this need to add more people to the province. And, Mr. Speaker, if we look at other provinces, there

are constituencies where the elected provincial representatives represent more people than we currently do here in Saskatchewan now. Mr. Speaker, they somehow manage to represent their constituents and do the job. According to a *StarPhoenix* article from March 12th, 2012, it goes on to say:

Saskatchewan has an average of 17,817 voters per riding, compared to 21,198 in neighbouring Manitoba. The difference is even greater when compared to Alberta, with 43,919 voters per riding, British Columbia with 51,765, and Ontario, which has 120,110 voters per riding on average.

So, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, members opposite, their argument that it is about, it's about numbers, I just don't buy it because there are other provincial legislatures, Mr. Speaker, provincial parliaments that are somehow managing at the same time as representing more people.

Mr. Speaker, so I've talked about a number of issues of concern here, Mr. Speaker. I've talked about how the requirement at 18 years of age for the calculations is not appropriate. In my view, I think it sends the wrong signal to Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan young people especially.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've talked about this notion of 18-year-olds being added to . . . This notion of adding three more MLAs — not eighteen more MLAs, three more MLAs to the Assembly — I don't think there is a real appetite and a real desire among the Saskatchewan public for this to occur. I think this is something that a few members are pushing on the opposite side for whatever reason. I'll allow voters to draw their own conclusions on that one. I think members on the backbenches, if they had a face-to-face conversation with some of those that are pushing it, would see, Mr. Speaker, that this isn't an issue that Saskatchewan people want to talk about.

It wasn't in the election platform, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't in the Throne Speech, which was even an opportunity after the election to openly talk about this and to be clear and straightforward with all Saskatchewan people about what the government intends to do. They chose not to include it at that time. Mr. Speaker, I find that puzzling. I find that disturbing. I think members opposite, if they have an idea that they think is good, if they have an idea that they think has the public's will behind it, they ought to be clear with Saskatchewan people and put it in the election platform, in the Throne Speech, as opposed to simply introducing it in the House here.

We've been clear on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We're not in favour of such changes. We think that this piece of legislation should be pulled back or, at the very minimum, there ought to be some proper consultations with Saskatchewan people about the need for more politicians in the Assembly. My hope, Mr. Speaker, is that some of the backbenchers over there, some of the newly elected, would have the courage to go talk to those that are pushing this and say this is something that should occur. Because, Mr. Speaker, that's not what they've been hearing from their constituents, in my view.

So those are my comments, Mr. Speaker, on this piece of legislation, Bill No. 36. I've enjoyed the opportunity to make a few remarks on this piece of legislation and at this time I would

move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 36. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 36, *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 26

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 26 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2011*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this Bill, Bill No. 26, *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2011*. As indicated by his comments on March 5th in *Hansard*, the minister is attempting to repeal five statutes that are, in his words, "no longer necessary to retain on the books as these laws are obsolete or spent." And the five Bills that are being repealed are *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*, *The Communications Network Corporation Act*, *The On-farm Quality Assurance Programs Act*, *The Soil Drifting Control Act*, and *The Special Payment (Dependent Spouses) Act* is the fifth one.

[15:00]

With respect to the first one, he indicates that *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*, which was passed in 2005, was to exempt two collectively bargained agreements from section 33(3) of *The Trade Union Act* which restricted the length of their collective agreement. And in 2008 the government enacted amendments to *The Trade Union Act* which repealed that subsection. So therefore the employers and the eight unions are now able to negotiate collective agreements for a term that he says is appropriate for the parties. So given the repeal of the subsection, there was no need for . . . the repeal of the subsection in *The Trade Union Act*, this Bill is no longer necessary.

So in terms of that Bill, Mr. Speaker, there isn't much comment at this point. So I don't think that there's any point in further commenting with that other than we know the type of legislation that the government has introduced in respect to trade unions, and are concerned about the human rights as articulated by the Court of Queen's Bench in their judgment in the last couple of months about the Charter, the Charter compliance of some of these Bills. So we are certainly watching the actions of the government very closely in that regard, and we'll be anxious to see the results of the appeal. It's suspected by the pundits that the case will go all the way to the Supreme Court because it does codify and clarify, with the courts, the right to strike, which is an important right, Mr. Speaker, in our

government and in our society and in our democracy as the right of the collectives.

And we see sort of a backlash against those rights even with the demise of the single desk of the Canadian Wheat Board, which was a collective right of farmers to have their wheat marketed fairly and with advantage to . . . around the world by a marketing agent that had only their best interests at heart and not the interests of shareholders in some foreign company or country. Anyways that's the extent of my comments on the first section of the Act.

The second repealed Bill, if this Bill goes through, will be *The Communications Network Corporation Act*. My colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale has spoken earlier today on the somewhat reckless dismantling of the Saskatchewan Communications Network, again something that was valued by Saskatchewan people and particularly by those in the film and production industry. And it's disconcerting for sure to see that the government was so quick to sell it off when it was valued at \$4 million, and yet it was sold for \$350,000 — so that's less than 10 per cent. I'll tell you when I go shopping and I see something that's marked down to 10 per cent of its original value, I know that that's a heck of a deal, Mr. Speaker. And then if I'm able to turn around and sell it for \$3 million, so increase my investment by . . . I don't even know the math between \$350,000 and \$3 million, but I know it's a darn good investment if I can sell it for that much.

So all things considered, I'm not sure about the wisdom of the government in repealing this Act and in fact in destroying the Saskatchewan Communications Network as it did. But that water's under the bridge and they're forging ahead, and we will see what happens to the film industry in Saskatchewan as a result. Certainly we would like to see more investment in the film industry.

We're seeing investment in record paces in other areas that this government has attached itself to. And nearly every day goes by and there's further announcements in other areas, so we're looking to make sure that the arts and culture in Saskatchewan are also supported in the same way that other industries are. Cultural industries are an important part of the fabric of our nation and certainly of our province. And it would be prudent, I think, on the part of this government to keep that in mind because people come here for quality of life as well, and having a strong arts and culture component to society is important.

The one Bill I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about is the repeal of *The On-farm Quality Assurance Programs Act*.

The minister in his comments indicated that the Act came into effect in '98 to provide a way for on-farm food safety programs to be recognized in Saskatchewan. And we all know what happens when quality assurance programs are not maintained well. We can have outbreaks of all sorts of bacteria and other types of harmful diseases on humans who are using the food that is produced, in these large industries particularly. And I think the listeriosis outbreak a few years ago was one that's of note, Mr. Speaker.

So these on-farm food safety programs are designed to enhance

safety and quality of agricultural products. What this Act did was it recognized producer organizations, and then they were able to designate delivery agents that would implement these on-farm quality assurance programs.

Now what do we mean by on-farm? I guess the whole notion of farm these days brings to mind a number of different images, depending on who you are and what your background is. But I assume it was meant to deal with small farms and large farms, and those are very different considerations, Mr. Speaker.

The minister went on to refer to the services and the products or the programs that these agents were delivering were replaced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency when it agreed to take on a role in on-farm food safety or, as he refers to it, OFFS. He's indicating that the Act is no longer necessary because the CFIA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, has developed policies and protocol for national producer-led OFFS programs, and so that the fact the Bill has never been used on a provincial level is a sign that it isn't necessary because these programs are now national in scope. So it makes sense I guess in that context to amend or call for the repeal.

I guess one of the concerns I have though is the ability of the Canada Food Inspection Agency to do its job. And we're hearing a number of reports about the upcoming federal budget which is of concern, Mr. Speaker, because the CFIA has received several cuts in the past, and it looks like they're slated . . . I think one of the articles I read indicated that they may be cut up to over 200 jobs in the next budget. Now that's certainly of grave concern to anyone who's worried about the quality of their food because even though these national programs are in place with the national organizations related to beef and pork and all the other farm products, there's still no oversight by the CFIA if they continue to cut as they have. There's documents from the agency itself that said . . . This is a quote from the *Vancouver Sun* on March 4th, and it says, of this year, they "could be forced to cut more than 200 food safety workers when the federal budget is delivered" on . . . this year.

So we're worried that if they're cutting all those inspection workers, 200 food safety workers, what does that mean for the ability to manage and observe the work of these national producer-led programs? It's great that the producer-led programs are there and that they have a presence and that they're guiding the nation and that there's consistency across the nation. But the concern is, if there's no one watching them, then where could breakdowns occur? And we certainly don't want to see anything happen like we did in 2008 when the listeriosis outbreak killed 28 people.

So funding, the article further goes on to say that funding is already so tight that the CFIA can hardly react to food contamination incidents, and they can only react after people are sick rather than detecting them before they happen. So there's concerns about that, Mr. Speaker, and I guess, why not have a Saskatchewan flavour on this? Why not keep control of our on-farm food safety, particularly, I think in the larger context where things can go wrong quickly in the large hog barns and the other, the cattle feedlots, Mr. Speaker? So I guess I just question some concerns about deferring to the federal, the ability of the federal government when these cuts are coming, and whether or not we should keep more of a watch here

provincially on those types of issues and ensure that quality assurance on farms is well looked after and managed appropriately.

The next Bill that's proposed to be repealed and the next Act that's proposed to be repealed under this Act to repeal miscellaneous obsolete statutes is one called *The Soil Drifting Control Act*. And the minister's comments in regards to that one just says, it's an old piece of legislation. It came in force in 1941 and gave rural municipalities an authority to pass a soil drifting bylaw.

I wasn't born then. I was born sometime after that. But I certainly remember as a child growing up — and this is well after the dirty thirties, Mr. Speaker; it was in the '60s — but the idea of the Russian thistle. And that was kind of a big event in my childhood because every spring we would gather all the Russian thistle off the farm fences and have these wonderful bonfires. And I think quite a few people can remember those, growing up. But it was a sign of the effect of the '30s, and of course Russian thistle was just one thing that would sort of cause problems for farmers because they were a terrible weed. But I also remember seeing soil drifting even when I was a kid, and so of course around the farm table there was always discussions on how to control that.

A number of different methods have been tried; many, many different methods have been tried to prohibit soil drifting. My dad remembers times in the '30s when they were setting the table for supper. They would have to turn the bowls over, and then as soon as the food was ready, blow them off, and then quickly eat their supper as fast as they can because they would be eating dirt as well. So I can only imagine what the lungs of those people looked like when those storms were going on — certainly was a problem in the '30s.

Different things that have been tried — summerfallow was one of the obvious ones, just to leave the till decompose naturally. We as kids had fun in the summerfallow too, because those were great for what we called lump fights. So the cousins and we'd get together, and then of course we'd go swimming in the creek afterwards, and it was all fun and games until somebody got hit in the eye with a lump. But anyways, so that was one method that certainly our family tried.

Strip farming was another method that was used and of course the idea of shelterbelts, well known in Saskatchewan, and certainly with the work of the tree nursery in Indian Head. The ubiquitous caragana is everywhere, and of course again as kids we had lots of fun using the pods and making flowers with the leaves and all that. But it was certainly a serious program. And I can remember Stan Tallon's farm just north of our farm where there was a hill that really was completely exposed and then a huge alkali pit below.

I lived and grew up in the Palliser Triangle, Mr. Speaker, and that was an area that maybe in retrospect should never have been broken for farming, but it was. And there's been good years and bad years, but it was certainly the heart of the dirty thirties, and indeed my dad will tell stories, as a young child, seeing cart after cart of farmers going by, leaving the farm. They just couldn't make it. They were probably starving to death in some instances, and then getting relief from Eastern

Canada. That's a long time ago, Mr. Speaker, but it still resonates in the memories of a lot of people, and certainly farmers have taken account of that and have continually improved the farming methods they use to improve the risk of soil drifting.

Finally, you know, there are programs like the prairie farm rehabilitation association which introduced programs like the permanent cover program. And what that program did, Mr. Speaker, was help restore some of the lands that should never have been broken. So we had a number of farmers that were approached by PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] and were encouraged to put the land under permanent cover. And certainly the work of Ducks Unlimited and other groups like that, and conservation easements, have helped restore lands that shouldn't have been broken and restore them to natural cover, or I guess artificial cover at first, but to reclaim their natural cover.

And those kinds of programs have been really important, not only in drifting areas, but in alkali areas. So farmers have shown a lot of ingenuity, and I think the thing to be worried about, I guess, when we're getting rid of something like this is the belief that it will never happen again.

And there are articles available that tell us about the changes and the climate changes that we're experiencing right now, and the possibility of drastic weather is certainly a reality. We saw it in the flooding last year and, you know, the signs of perhaps some other extreme climate changes or extreme weather may impact farmers. So the notion of a long dry spell is not without reach, Mr. Speaker, and I think that these kinds of Acts should maybe be around to remind us that we need to be able to allow municipal governments to control situations, if and when they get out of hand again.

There's growing concerns about the implications of high-yield agricultural production when you couple it with soil degrading factors such as wind and water erosion. So I think these are things that I'm hoping the Ministry of Agriculture is looking for and being aware of so that we are ready to respond if and when the high-yield production causes soil drifting.

[15:15]

There's different other things that can happen. There's organic matter loss, there's salinization, acidification, contamination. So these concerns are linked to the technological advances that have been made in agriculture. And I think it's definitely something that we look to this government to keep an eye on to ensure that in the event of extreme weather. And it's very hard to predict those things. We saw what happened last year with the flooding and the incredible plow wind that destroyed a large swath of forest in northern Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately those trees that were knocked down — and I would think there's probably hundreds of thousands — because even in the one area that I'm familiar with there was tens of thousands of trees blown down and the companies that are now harvesting in the Prince Albert forest management area are not picking up those trees at all. It's not productive for them. And it's unfortunate that all those trees are being put to waste just because they can't be retrieved and that we're cutting down

additional forest instead.

So those are some of the things we need to look out with extreme weather. And I think the soil drifting concerns that were experienced when this Bill was passed in 1941 are concerns that continue. It's just that the weather is different and certainly farming has changed considerably.

So again farmers have done a lot of improvements on it and certainly farming has changed so that we see different techniques to deal with this. But in the end I think we have to be very concerned about serious climate change and weather change and how that's going to impact farmers and the soil itself and the quality of the soil itself. There is a lot of organizations out there right now, Mr. Speaker, that are looking at preserving the quality of our soil, and it would be nice to see them assisted, along with their research and their education programs for farmers, with some support from this government.

So that would be the fourth Bill that's being proposed to be repealed under this Bill. And then the final one is a Bill called *The Special Payment (Dependent Spouses) Act*. And the minister indicated in his comments at the introduction of this Bill that it was acted in 1999 to give an *ex gratia* payment to widows whose workers' compensation benefits were terminated due to remarriage before September 1st, 1985, and because of that limitation on application, there is no one who is applying for it anymore because the widow had to apply within a two-year period after the legislation. So obviously that time frame has passed, and this is one Act that makes sense under this Bill to be repealed.

So I think those are the five pieces of legislation. I again commend the good people at the Ministry of Justice who are working hard to keep things up to date and nicely tuned up. So this is important work that they are doing. And again I'm not sure how the cuts are affecting the Department of Justice and the civil servants that are doing this kind of work. And if positions aren't being filled like they aren't being filled in the Highways ministry and where we hear other positions aren't being filled, it certainly will limit the ability of these civil servants to keep an eye on the housekeeping items related to our bulk of legislation that this province is governed by.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know other colleagues of mine will want to comment on some of these, the repeal of these Bills, so I think I would like to adjourn debate on Bill No. 26.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment on Bill No. 26, *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 24

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 24** — *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act* be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to rise today to join in the debate on Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*.

It's sort of a historic piece in some ways, Mr. Speaker. Of course the Office of the Children's Advocate has been with us for quite some time, or the advocate for children and youth, as is stated, but commonly known as the Children's Advocate.

The Children's Advocate was brought into existence in 1994, but up until this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, has been combined under the authorizing legislation for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman, of course, dating back to the early '70s and the then Allan Blakeney NDP government's bringing this in, the position of the Children's Advocate as an independent officer being brought in in '94 as a position to better advocate for children and youth by the then Romanow NDP government.

So in some ways, it's a fairly straightforward piece of legislation in that it's enabling legislation. It gives the office its authority, establishes that in a new sense, separate and apart from the previous Ombudsman's Act.

On the part of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, we've sent this out for consultation through the community. And particularly of interest to the opposition was the observations about this legislation by the Ombudsman and by the Children's Advocate.

I've had the privilege to rise in the debate concerning Bill No. 25, *The Ombudsman Act*, which of course is the re-establishment of the Ombudsman legislation, Bill No. 24, separating out the functions associated with the advocate for children and youth and providing stand-alone legislation to govern its duties as an independent officer.

So in consultation with the Children's Advocate and with the Ombudsman, we've got a number of things flagged with us. But on the whole, the response was positive to the changes, and again largely reflective of the fact that this isn't exactly revolutionary. It takes the two functions which had been sheltered under one piece of legislation and attaches them to their own individual pieces of legislation.

But one of the things that was interesting around . . . We're happy to hear that the Children's Advocate had an opportunity to provide input into the draft legislation, and so again that work being done from the start and not in a reactionary or retroactive kind of manner. We're happy to see that the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman have been involved early on before the legislation hit the House, which is as it should be for independent officers of this Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're interested to see that the Children's Advocate had a number of points to make, one being the new legislation provides for modernization of language with recognition of youth as a distinct group from children and legislative standards that use gender neutral terms. Again that might seem a bit, a bit housekeeping in nature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that modernization is obviously important to keep the legislation and its intent not just current but clarified.

The Children's Advocate commented in a favourable way on

the legislation providing clearer jurisdictional definitions to include the advocate's authority over health agencies and entities, also the expansion of the mandate to become involved in advocacy and to conduct research into the rights of children and youth. I think of the work that the Children's Advocate had done around the event such as the International Year of the Child, the different reports that past children's advocates have been provided, and we look forward quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, to the work that the current Children's Advocate will do to ensuring that the child welfare review is appropriately dealt with and make sure that that important piece of public policy is made real and to have impact and positive force in people's lives.

We also look with a great interest to the comments that have been provided from the Children's Advocate with the Conservative crime Bill federally, Bill C-10, and not so much on the cost of the Bill but on the effect of the Bill, which the Children's Advocate saw as hurting not helping the situation as relates to young people and the criminal justice system. And again, it's good to see that that is something is clearly protected in the mandate as differentiated from the Ombudsman in this individual piece of legislation.

The legislation provides explicit permission for government ministries and agencies to share information voluntarily with the advocate to resolve complaints in a non-adversarial and timely manner. Again, Mr. Speaker, with information privacy coming ever further to the fore and the public's consideration as to how they deal with government institutions, and with government entities themselves having some rightful concerns around whether or not they're discharging their duties under pieces of legislation such as the HIPA or *The Health Information Privacy Act*. It's good to have that specifically addressed in the legislation.

We're interested to see how this one works out. The Children's Advocate has saluted the expanded rights for children and youth living in care or custody to be made aware of access and have privileged communications with the advocate. Again, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people that do a lot very difficult work working with youth in care, but it should never be forgotten that the actual youth in care have rights as human beings and that those must be not just addressed but be seen to be addressed.

And certainly that's one of the roles that I first came into contact with the Office of the Children's Advocate in a formal way, working with children and youth in care and the folks representative of that network and the helpful role that the advocate can play to make sure that (a) people are doing their job, but first and foremost to provide another level of assurance and security that children are getting their due from the system and that they're not being mistreated or abused, which again, Mr. Speaker, is when kids go into care, that's the stated intention is to oftentimes bring to a halt abusive situations or inappropriate situations.

So again we need to make sure that the corrections that are put forward by society do just that, that they live up to their potential and that these negative situations aren't made worse or compounded. And we've got a lot of, a lot of sad examples of people in positions of trust that have abused that trust, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, and the terrible consequences that has had through generations for the children and the youth that were in those positions of trust on forward. And again if the work of the Children's Advocate can guard against those kind of situations, we think that's very important work indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So again striking that balance and making sure that rights are not just proclaimed but secured and gainsaid in the system, that comes back to things like the legislation that we have under question here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's, I think, at the heart of the legislation that had been previously housed in the Ombudsman Act that brought the Children's Advocate into being. But to see that we've come this way from 1994 to present where there's a clear need to have independent legislation for the Children's Advocate, we think that is appropriate.

One thing that's flagged from the Children's Advocate that remains to be seen how it works out is concerning the advocate's jurisdiction around school boards. The advocate's office rightly points out that that issue is complex and would affect a significant part of the education system. As such, it cannot be resolved within the time frame for drafting and introduction of the new Bill. Therefore, we have agreed to defer discussion of this issue until such a time as the government, our office, and members of the education community can be consulted. Again, Mr. Speaker, that is as it should be. But it certainly flags for the official opposition an issue that we'll be watching as it goes forward to see how it is resolved, to see how it is handled by this government in conjunction with the Children's Advocate office.

[15:30]

I guess in the second reading speech of the minister on December 14th of 2011, not too terribly long ago, it went through, much as I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rationale that has propelled this legislation forward, the time having come for an independent piece of legislation for the Children's Advocate in the way that it has evolved from under the umbrella of the Ombudsman legislation and the need for it.

Again in terms of stated principles for the Act — to help children receiving services from the government and publicly funded entities, to clarify the advocate's power to address complaints related to publicly funded health entities, to allow the advocate to conduct research in the area of children's rights, to allow government ministries and agencies to co-operate in sharing information with the advocate — again the goal there is to create a more welcoming environment for youth to bring forward their concerns. We hope that those stated goals are indeed facilitated by this legislation.

And again in the second reading, it's touched upon. The second reading speech from the minister, it's touched upon the fact that the advocate's office was created in '94 but with the Ombudsman having responsibility for administration at the office of the advocate, the next step of evolution being in 2000 with the Ombudsman's oversight of the advocate's office being removed from the legislation. And so this carries that through, Mr. Speaker, in terms of that evolution.

I guess at this point I will pretty much wrap up my remarks. I think I have other colleagues that are anxious to participate in debate on other items of legislation before the Assembly. So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 25

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 25** — *The Ombudsman Act, 2011* be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure to wade into the discussion about Bill No. 25, an Act respecting the Ombudsman. This is a sister piece of legislation to Bill No. 24 that my colleague from Regina Elphinstone just spoke to.

Basically what it does, this is splitting apart the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate into two different statutes. Right now as it stands, *The Ombudsman's Act* existed and the Children's Advocate was an addition at one point in time. But both bodies, both entities have asked for the opportunity to have separate statutes outlining the work that they do and ensuring that they can fulfill their mandate more effectively.

I think one of the — this seems perhaps like a smaller thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but one of the things that this Bill does is it includes gender-neutral language, or it's changed all the terms to ensure that they're gender-neutral.

I spoke about this a little bit with Bill No. 24 when I had the opportunity to do this. I know that language might seem like a small thing, or whether you use a he or a she, it doesn't matter. But I know from my own experience — and there's much literature out there about the messages that language sends to us — sort of the undercurrent message that's sent when you would use the word him or he throughout a document.

And my own experience actually, I used to be a reporter a very long time ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and when I started out as a reporter I was not a big fan of gender-neutral language. I thought, oh what's the big deal? But actually I started to realize as I got a little bit older, and actually it was when I became a mom and I was a stay-at-home mom or an at-home mom, the interesting thing for me is I would . . . People would ask, well, Danielle, what do you do for work? And I would say, well I'm an at-home mom, and they'd say, oh you don't work. Well anybody who's ever been home with children — men or women — happens to know that the work that happens in the home, albeit unpaid, happens to be incredibly valuable and is work indeed, but we just don't value or pay for that work, Mr.

Deputy Speaker.

So that was sort of my first experience with starting to realize that the language that people use when they speak to us or about us sends us very clear messages about who we are and our importance as we go out into this world. So I very much appreciate the move to using gender-neutral language in Bill 24 and Bill No. 25. And right now it's Bill No. 25, *An Act respecting the Ombudsman*, to which I'm speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So in terms of more substantive work, what does this piece of legislation do? Well for the Ombudsman it expands the definition of agency or government. So now the expansion of the definition of agency or government now includes a publicly funded health entity. And I know the Ombudsman believes that this will better able the office to fulfill an expanded role in the health field. So previously, health had been excluded from the Ombudsman's Act, so I think this is a very good move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The second thing that this Bill No. 25 does, it allows the Ombudsman to conduct investigations where requested by non-governmental organizations. So Ombudsman Saskatchewan now has the chance and the ability and the authority to conduct investigations under certain circumstances where they've actually . . . where their request has come in by a NGO [non-governmental organization]. So I know the Ombudsman also sees this as a very important piece to add to this statute. They want to be able to . . . They could do an investigation perhaps for a municipality or a rural government or a school board or community-based organization. For example, school boards right now still aren't included under this legislation, but at the bare minimum, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's the opportunity now for the Ombudsman, when a request comes in, to be able to do an investigation.

What is another substantive part of this legislation? Well it includes the expansion of privileged communication. So what does that mean? So:

Privileged communication to Ombudsman Saskatchewan will now include letters written on behalf of persons in custody or confined to an institution. Those institutions that confine persons will now have to establish procedures that permit a restricted complainant to communicate with the Ombudsman and inform the person that they have a right to communicate with the Ombudsman.

It won't be easy to implement, I'm sure, and organizations will have to think about how they best implement this. But I think it's absolutely imperative that, no matter where a person is, whether you're in custody or happen to be confined to an institution, you should still have the opportunity to, when you feel aggrieved by government or that you feel like something has gone off the rails, that you still have the opportunity to state your case and state some of the problems without fear of being penalized, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I think that that's a very good piece, that expansion of privileged communications. So that's very positive.

Another addition to this statute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the

ability to obtain information from government agencies on a voluntary basis. And I know both the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman have tried to work collaboratively or co-operate with government in terms of getting information, but there was no legislative authority in *The Ombudsman Act* before that'll actually allow this process. So I think it's always a benefit to the people of Saskatchewan when things are done co-operatively, when people are trying to resolve issues and not skirt things under the carpet or that people are working together, both the Ombudsman's office and whatever department or ministry might be involved, that it's much better to be co-operative than combative, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There's one piece here that I know the Ombudsman did not request and was not a part of the Ombudsman's hope for this Act. But another piece of it includes access to reports, includes . . . Pardon me. My lips again, as per usual, are not working very well here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What it does, it excludes Ombudsman access to reports that are produced by health quality review councils. So this was not a request by the Ombudsman. And so one always asks, where did this request come from? Why was this put into the Act? And we don't know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I know that the Ombudsman . . . This wasn't something coming directly from the Ombudsman's office. I know that having more access for an agency that does some of the research and investigation that it does, having more access is better.

So I know the Ombudsman doesn't have any strong reservations about this but is wondering where this came from. So they want to make sure that health authorities realize that, while the Ombudsman is not entitled to obtain reports from health quality review councils or committees, that they are not prevented from supplying them if it would be helpful to the investigation to do so. So again this goes to the piece around the need to be co-operative in making sure that the body that does investigations has all the tools and information in front of it to be able to do a thorough investigation.

So that in summary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what Bill No. 25 is all about. It's breaking the Children's Advocate and Ombudsman into two different pieces, basically two different statutes, and I know both offices have asked for that. So I know that I have colleagues who are interested in speaking to this Bill and to other Bills as we go along here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So with that, I'd like to move to adjourn debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Riversdale has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 25, *The Ombudsman Act, 2011*. 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. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 27** — *The Education Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to enter into the debate on Bill No. 27, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995*. As a teacher on leave from the Saskatoon Public School Board, I take a particular interest in issues around education, and also as a parent and also as a taxpayer and most importantly as an MLA. And I find this one most interesting because of what is really in this Act, and while it seems relatively straightforward, there's a lot of issues in this Act that we have a lot of questions.

And of course, as the minister said in her remarks that, and I'll quote. It was December 14th when she said right off the bat, "I rise today to move the second reading of Bill No. 27, *The Education Amendment Act, 2011*. To meet the Premier's commitment for students to start the 2012-13 school year after the Labour Day long weekend . . ." And so that seems to be one of the main causes.

But there's other things in this Bill as well. But I do want to talk about that because we were all kind of caught off guard. And I just want to quote from the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news, and this is posted October 27th. I'm not sure if it was actually October 27th.

But during the campaign that we were all engaged in, all of a sudden there was an announcement — and I remember that morning in Saskatoon — by the Premier, saying that they were going to change the school year. And where did that come from? We had no idea. And in fact, it talks about, the headline here is, "School year pledge slammed by teachers, school boards." And it goes on to talk about that, and I'll quote, "The Saskatchewan Party's promise to change the school year to start after the Labour Day long weekend is not sitting well with organizations that represent teachers and school boards."

Yes, they were caught off guard. They had no idea that this was coming. The election was just closing up. It was really closing up. Most of the major planks of the platforms had been announced, and all of a sudden this came out of, really, thin air. Where did this come from? But I do have to say what was interesting here. I do have to say I admire the Premier for at least putting this out in front of people. That's a very good thing because people then could vote on it if it was an issue.

[15:45]

Or maybe it wasn't an issue, as opposed to some of the other things we're seeing coming forward like the three new politicians that's going to cost millions of dollars over the course of years that was not put forward, was not put forward. And we don't know why that wasn't put forward. But yet this thing, as radical as it was, a real curveball coming out of thin air, nobody saw that coming. The Teachers' Federation had no idea. The school board, provincial organization, had no idea. There was no advance warning. Everybody heard it on the news like everybody else, except for Tourism Saskatoon who had conducted a survey.

And it's kind of interesting because, as it goes on further down, it said . . . Well this is what the quote was. And I quote, "The

party said if it wins the provincial election, it will introduce legislation mandating that classes cannot start until the Tuesday following Labour Day."

And it goes on to say:

Party leader Brad Wall said the reason is primarily an economic one. He said a recent study by Tourism Saskatchewan showed a majority of tourism-related businesses are hurt by the traditional pre-Labour Day start to the school year.

Fair enough. So how did that information come about? The information came about because the tourism organization had conducted an online survey in November '10 to 2,113 businesses and communities. Of that, 390 respondents completed at least one question; 335 finished the entire survey. So I would add that up quickly. That's about 700. About one-third, 30 per cent of the people actually completed the survey, thought it was important enough to actually complete. Thirty per cent of the people took the time to complete an online survey sent out by Tourism Saskatchewan, and of that only 335, just about 15 per cent of the people actually completed the survey. And yet and of that, of that 15 per cent, a total of 60 per cent indicated the school year had either "some" or a "significant" impact on their operations. So 60 per cent of . . . That would be about 42. That's 42. It's 420.

Anyways, here you have . . . Where is our math crew while we're here? Where are they? Get them in here. Get them in here. That sounds like grade 5 math. A small number here, a small number is driving our educational policy, educational policy. And I'm wondering if this is going to be turned over to the folks over there to figure out this, but this really is amazing. But you know, I think it's an interesting thing. And as I said earlier, as I said earlier, at least the Premier had the courage to say, this is what our platform is. And fair enough, and he said that it's going to be an economic issue. And fair enough. That's a good thing.

But what we have here, it's, you know, and then he goes on to say in this quote, the Premier, and I quote, he has "also heard from parents that starting school before Labour Day gets in the way of family time." He goes on, and I quote, "It kind of ruins the last long weekend of the summer for families who might be travelling, vacationing or camping." So this is an interesting issue, and I think that this is what's driving this Bill that's before us now, Bill No. 27, *An Act to amend The Education Act*.

And it goes on and then actually CBC did their own poll. Ironically, this time they got 2,700 votes, not 700 votes in here, and actually 1,000 people thought it was a great idea. They liked the idea of a longer summer holiday. Two hundred and two people thought it was a bad idea; it was going to ruin the winter holiday. And then I guess those are the people who have patience and can plan ahead. And you know, they've had a good summer holiday. They know it's coming down — this sounds like an Aesop's fable to me, those who plan for winter. Or they maybe have already bought their winter holiday, I bet. I bet they've paid for their ticket to someplace south.

And so then it goes on and then somebody says here, over 600

people say, it's strange that this is suddenly a campaign issue. And you know, the election was the first part of November and this was done October, the end of October. Yes, it was kind of strange that this came out of nowhere and felt that this was really odd.

And then the other one which I thought was very interesting, over 30 per cent said, this seems to be about helping the tourism industry, not helping families. And I think in many ways that's true. Like who do you really care about? Who do you really care about? Do you care about the tourists, the tourism industry, which I think is a very important sector of our economy? A very important sector. But we've known that the impact, these school holidays have always had an impact in Saskatchewan. So this was not something new.

So I thought this was an interesting, interesting thing that should be driving our education policy but, you know, I do want to relate one thing that I think is very interesting here, because as that group of people, over 800 people, thought this was being driven by tourism, I think there are some good reasons for starting after Labour Day.

You know, many of us were in Chicago, I think in 2005 or '06. It was the Midwest Legislative Conference down in Chicago. And I'm thinking, you know, as I look across the way, I'm not sure if anybody was in the room. Some of us were there and it was a very interesting time to be down in . . . and you know, when we go to these Midwest legislative conferences you never know where you pick up ideas. You know, we talked in the halls, we listened to the presenters, and they're all very, very, very important. But one of the topics was talking about education and of course in the States they wrestle a lot with how to improve standards. United States used to be, used to be one of the leaders in the world in terms of education and it really . . . They took a lot of pride in that.

And in fact, you know, myself when I started education in teachers college here at the University of Regina, we talked about the Sputnik effect, when Russians got their man or their first rocket into orbit and how Americans were terribly ashamed of that. And they made a special drive in the '60s to turn that around, to turn around, because that was not going to happen again.

And for people in North America, Americans and Canadians, it had a huge impact in our education system in the '60s, in the '70s. There was a lot more emphasis put on education and how we could do things better here in our country, our provinces, and most particularly in our schools in preparing our youth for the next challenges. Because if you remember the changes that were happening in the '50s and '60s to the baby boomers, what was pre-World War II was not going to be the same thing as post-World War II. And if anything really epitomized that, it was the space race and the fact that Sputnik was up in space before the Americans. That really cast a shadow over things.

So fast forward to 2005 in Chicago. And what did Chicago do? They instituted a program called first day. And they went to a system where they said all the kids have to be in school on the first day of school. And what was really interesting about this — and people who may have been on school boards can really appreciate that, or in school administration — is also this is a

time they took the student counts. So the funds you got paid per student was on the first day. And so wouldn't it be interesting if in Saskatchewan on the first Tuesday after Labour Day we said, your school board grants are based on the number of kids you have on Tuesday — not on 20 days later or three weeks later like they are now, but actually on that day.

Now the reason they said that was because they believe — and what was driving this was not an economic reason for tourism or anything like that, but they believe and they have studies to prove — that kids who are on the first day of school perform better than kids who come on the fifth, the sixth, or the eighth day. So this is an interesting idea about changing the school day, the start of the school year to Tuesday, the first Tuesday after Labour Day because kids should be able to be there. But I think we're only getting half steps here. I think it would be very interesting for us to say to school boards, your school grants now will be based on the kids that are in their school, in their desks on the first day.

The reason Chicago did this . . . And it's interesting because Chicago is the largest public school system in North America. The largest public school board is in Chicago. The population of Chicago is about 2.8 million, 2.9 million. And other large cities like Los Angeles, New York, Toronto have broken up their school systems so they're much smaller, but for some reason Chicago Public Schools is one big, massive system.

But it wasn't performing very well, and what was happening was because of the poverty that was in Chicago — and we all know about the east side of Chicago and those issues — that kids were not attending school. And if there's one thing that we've come to appreciate, that kids need to be in school. They need to have good teachers. They need to have good resources. There's a whole list of things they need, but one of the things they need to be is they need to be in school. They can't be truant. And what was happening in Chicago, the message was to many kids, don't really come to school until we count you. It's not important that you're there for first day. But we know what happens.

I've come from a very fortunate situation where we always valued school, so we would be there on the first day. We looked forward to the first day. We didn't have the barriers that many kids have in terms of affordable housing, the family's under a lot of stress, maybe moving into town for a variety of reasons, leaving different situations. And so this is important that Chicago had to change their system around and get better results.

And what they did is the same sort of thing that Saskatchewan's doing but for a different reason. It's not an economic tourism reason, as valid as that is. They were saying, we want our kids to do better. It's important that our kids do better. So they had this saying about making sure kids were in school, counted on the first day.

And what we saw when we were at the Midwest Legislative Conference, what I really picked up was — and we were there I think it was about the first week or second week of August — that already the school system was operating so that they were making sure kids were ready on the first day. They were going out to the communities, telling families, where do your kids go

to school? They wanted to make sure the kids were in their seats on the first day of school. If there were any issues around health care — because in the States obviously it's a little bit more complicated — all those issues had to be dealt with. Or if there was issues around housing, this was all dealt with. And it was just a big, big drive to make sure kids were in school because they would fit in. They felt like they belonged. They bonded with their teachers, and it was an amazing thing to see.

And it was an amazing thing to watch as an outsider from Saskatchewan to watch Chicago TV. You know, you're in a hotel room and you turn on the late night news, and there you would see Mayor Daley talking about get your kids to school on the first day of school. Or you might have some of the, you know, star basketball players from the Chicago Bulls talking about get your kids to school. Everybody was out making sure kids were going to be in school. Chicago was going to turn this around, and you know, I would love to know what the results of it, how it turned out. But to me it seemed like a really neat idea, and I've talked to many people about it.

Of course and it's a bit of a radical idea because the key is tying the money to first day. And if you do that, then all of a sudden you know you have people's attention. If you do it just as a gimmick, then really it's just another gimmick. But if you say, we're really serious about it . . . This is when school grants are going to be based on. We want your kids in school. That's where they belong for every day. And it was a huge, huge thing.

Interestingly just as a bit of a footnote to this, the person who designed this system, now I don't know his name off the top of my head, but he is Barack Obama's Secretary for Education. Of course Barack Obama came out of Chicago, and I think actually Barack Obama was at that conference. He was passing through. At that time, he was just a senator in the US [United States] Congress. And who knew what would be happening to him three or four short years later? It was a phenomenal thing. But here this friend of Barack Obama was the youngest CEO of a public school board of that size, and of course it was the biggest in the United States. I think he was 36 at the time. And he came out of a background not of education but was actually a business, young business type of guy but really saw what was really important: how are we going to turn these systems around?

[16:00]

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this Bill and I say, well the driving thing behind this is to implement a vision that the Premier had that kids would be in school on the first Tuesday after Labour Day, I think interesting idea, but maybe this could have even been better. You know, in terms of my idea, I think that we would have to do a lot of consulting because when you involve money, people get very upset. So I would not advocate going out there and doing this in much the same way as this government's doing this.

But I think it's interesting because we do count on the 15th day or the 20th day. And I think that that's unfortunate because I think every child matters, and I think that the reason we do things for education is about making sure for the children that they're getting the best possible education possible. We have to understand of course that there may be implications for other

sectors, i.e., tourism, and we have to respect that. We definitely have to respect that. But we have to really think about counting all children, all children. And all children matter, and they especially matter on the first day of school. And so I think this is really, really important.

An Hon. Member: — Yes, I agree. Even in boundaries.

Mr. Forbes: — Even as my colleague is saying. And you know, it is ironic that here we have this situation where you see another piece of legislation before where this government is dismissing 240, 250,000 children, throwing them out of the formula for the election figuring out constituency boundaries. I think if I were a young person, I'd be asking some questions. Don't I matter much? You know, I think that, I think, you know, framing this around the driver of the tourism sector, and why? You know, I think that there's too many instances where children and young people are not being counted, counted in, whether it's the first day of school or whether it's in the election, *The Constituency Boundaries Act*.

So I think that this is a major issue, and I think that there is some opportunities. And of course this government likes to talk about how it consults with stakeholders, and this clearly was a case of really catching people off guard, off guard. Not even saying, they could have said we're going to consult about, as part of a platform we're going to take a look at the school year and the implication of that.

And I will talk a little bit more about some of these sections of the Act as we drill down into the Act. And it may have looked like actually we were going to be talking about this Act regardless because some of the things when they talk about borrowing and talking to different groups, some of these conversations had started. But the one area that had not started was the one that the minister talks about right off the bat that drive home the promise of the Premier that schools would start on the first Tuesday after Labour Day and end before the last day of June.

So this is a real, this is a real challenge. And I think that this is one that we have a lot of questions about. And I know that it's quite a thick piece of legislation and one that really deserves a lot of commentary. And I know that each of us will have different things that we have to talk about, and there's a few things that I wanted to talk about. And of course the issue around the school year was one part of it.

But I just want to take a minute and review what the minister had said as she said that to meet — you know, as I said earlier, the number one issue clearly because she spoke of it first — is to meet the Premier's commitment for students to start the 2012-2000 school year after Labour Day long weekend. And the necessary amendments to this Act make that happen. And that means that students and their families can fully enjoy the last long weekend of the summer as they do in other provinces, including British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario.

You know, and I just have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I saw that list of British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, if they're looking for good ideas from British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, you could talk about rent control. It's funny how this government loves to bring in other provinces to

suit their own needs. And I actually think in these other provinces, children count in the election Act.

So here if you're modelling yourself after British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, I got two other things you can talk about. Rent control, of which 80 per cent of Canadians enjoy some protection, some stability, and I think when we talk about families fully enjoying things, one of the things they could full enjoy, I know in my city and here in Regina, is a little stability in their rents. And I think as they're preparing to go back to school, in many families I know in my riding and many other ridings say, well, I hope that we start out at this school. We hope we start out at this school, Princess Alex. But do I know I'm going to be finishing at Princess Alex because the rents are too high? So if she's thinking about how good things happen in British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario, then I would ask her to think about rent control because, there you go, that's another thing those three provinces have in common.

And then the other one that they have in common that British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, is that youth under the ages of 18 are also included in the formula for figuring out how many MLAs are needed or the constituency boundaries, how big they should be. That's what they do in those provinces. So I think if she's taking signals from those provinces . . .

And I should say too that British Columbia particularly had the same challenge that Saskatchewan does in terms of a growing population. And when they wanted to know should they get more MLAs, the government of the day did not say, let's have an election; bring it in after the election because the people will dislike it. What they did is they actually had a consultation about it beforehand. And it came back that, you know, what people wanted instead of more MLAs was they wanted more services because they're growing.

And if that to the people of British Columbia, which in fact MLAs represent by far more, a lot more people — I think the number is 55,000 that they represent, 55,000 people — as opposed to the 19,000 people here, but they do count their children. So if we're looking for British Columbia and Manitoba and Ontario for other good ideas because they seem to bring them up to support this idea, I think that they should take a good look at that and see what they're doing around there.

And she also goes on to talk about, and I quote:

I would like to stress that around school hours, holidays, vacations, and variations in the . . . school year, nothing has been finalized. We are listening and we are going to get input. The process of developing regulations will allow the opportunity to hear from all of the stakeholders. We envision that the regulations will still allow school divisions the flexibility to set their own school calendar . . . with teachers, parents, and the local community.

And then she also goes on to talk about some additional changes and, I think further down somewhere and I'll talk about this in the actual Bill, talks about setting the day when school starts. When it ends is currently in the Act.

And while we think these things are relatively straightforward,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are major changes. They are pretty major changes, and I would encourage the minister to be as public as she can be in these consultations. Because I mean, on two levels, there's the one level that (a) driving the change and is there a need for this. Has the public been saying this?

And again we often ask questions about this government who will often come up with the solution and then create a consultation to prove the solution. We saw that last night in the degree-granting Bill where they talked about access for students, that students wanted more access to post-secondary services, particularly being able to get degrees. But we know, at least we did, maybe they were getting a different message on the doorstep that people wanted places where they could get degrees more than they wanted support through student housing, affordable tuition, those types of things. And that didn't seem to register with the minister.

What he was hearing from students was, we want more degrees. We want more access to degree institutions. It's sort of like the MLA issue, you know. We heard and I suppose they heard that people — and I think, people hear all the time — we want better government. We want better government so we can provide better services whether it's health care, education, or highways. Today we had questions about some 200 staff that's not been replaced in the Department of Highways, and yet this is a government that made a big deal about safety four or five years ago in that January blizzard. And yet they're not filling those spots. And families and people who were on the highways during the blizzards, what are they to think when they hear that there's some 200 positions in the Department of Highways that we haven't filled this past winter?

We were sort of at the tail end of the blizzard, but if you were in the west side of the province you would know yesterday we had severe weather. Could we have used 200 more people? It looks like we got by that one all right, but I think many families would have some serious questions about we're closing highway service units — three we know so far. Will there be more tomorrow? I don't know. We'll find out. We've not filled 200 positions in the Department of Highways.

So you know, I don't think anybody on the doorstep when they meant we want better government didn't mean that we wanted bigger government or more MLAs. It's probably the last one, I think that this cost, by their own government estimates 700,000 a year, and over a course of a term that's — because they're elected for four years — that's close to 3 million. And then we're locked in. We're locked in for 10 years. So you are talking about millions and millions of dollars. The rolling clock is there. Is this the kind of thing that people were asking for when they asked for better services?

And so my point, Mr. Speaker, is that when people ask for . . . When this government goes out and asks for consultations on a solution they have, I think they should go out and say, what are we really looking for in terms of how we can have a better education system here in Saskatchewan? Because they may have some different points of view. They may have some different points of view.

I know for example, just before, in February, Mr. Speaker, I was at a new immigrant's youth forum at the Broadway Theatre

in Saskatoon, Broadway Theatre in Saskatoon. And the questions came up, and it was actually interesting because both directors from the Saskatoon public and greater Saskatoon Catholic system were there. And the students wanted to know what's going to happen to the February break. And of course neither director could give them a straight answer because we're in this discussion about the school year that came out of nowhere last October. And so the directors really were at a loss for an answer that satisfied the students.

But one of the directors did ask the students — there was probably a couple of hundred students there — they said, so what do you think? Do you like your February break? And what do you think they said? All their hands went up. They all like the February break. And so what do you think they would say? So I think what we're saying, Mr. Speaker, is that, you know, if you ask in a poll or you ask like that, you're going to get kind of the answer you're going to expect. But it's this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, but the one thing they didn't say is they wanted more MLAs. They didn't. And they also didn't say . . . I did have an opportunity. I'm glad you brought that up. I'm glad they brought this up.

Because you know what did come up? And I really do mean to bring this . . . What really did come up . . . I mean this is all . . . We didn't go through the exercise of raising our hands and stuff. But what really came up was one young person came up, and there was us at the front of the room — myself, the two directors, and a variety of other people — and the question was directed at me: what about those robo-calls? They wanted to know about the robo-calls. And of course to us, to the young people, we're all the same. We're all politicians. The young person wanted to know, what about the robo-calls? And I had to say . . . Because I was at a loss of words because this was really a federal issue, not a provincial issue, and you want to stay relevant to what you're supposed to be talking about.

[16:15]

So how could I get this back to what I'm supposed to be talking about? And so I had to say to the young person, you know, one of the issues that we're going to be talking about in the legislature, one of the issues we're going to be talking about is about how young people are taken into account by this government. And of course to them it was a bit of an abstract idea because they would prefer to be talking about how can they make sure they get their February break in. That's what's really important to them. So I tried to explain to them about *The Constituency Boundaries Act* and about how this is a new idea. Before, kids were taken into account, and they're not taken to account any more.

And so what I'm trying to say to these young people is make sure you count. Get out there and let people know that you have an opinion. Because what will happen to governments — and we see this in terms of the Bill before us — is that you have a lot of people who are making an assumption on your behalf. They assume that you want to come back to school after Labour Day, and fair enough. You know, I stated my opinion earlier, that actually I think in many ways it's a good idea, but it should be based on the kids' needs, not on an economic need. You need to take that into account. But I think there is a lot of good reasons for that. And so I think this is really important. I think

this is really important.

Now I think that this is a hugely critical issue and I think kids are going to . . . This is the kind of thing that cues kids into listening more carefully about the things that are happening in the world around them, and they are cued in to this thing. When you talk to them about school holidays, all of a sudden they get interested in that. And then they get a little more interested when they find out that they're being discounted or not counted in the formula for how we figure out our constituencies. So I think this is important.

But I think that there's big chunks that . . . I should really move on, because I know many people do want to talk about this but . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm glad that I'm getting a response from the other side. Because I think, as I said, this is a very important issue to me from many points of view, not only as an MLA but also as a parent, but also as a teacher.

Because I know, and as I said, and I'll talk about the regulations here as we move on, but I do want to say just briefly that one of the things . . . There are so many parts here that, as more people will talk about this issue, the issue around regulations, the classification system, the rolling of the two boards into one. And this one I think is an interesting one, and I'd be interested . . . You know, sometimes we hear from ministers that they are streamlining and they're making things easier and that's why we want to have things put together. And so we have the Classification Board and the Certification Board into one. And now — and I just love this handle — it will now be called the Teacher Education Certification and Classification Board, the TECC Board. That's quite a handful. That's quite a handful. And so I'm really going to be interested to see how this plays out. And it also has an appeal process for those who want to appeal a certification decision of the ministry.

And as a teacher, and especially one . . . I was certified in 1982 and I have to say that I was certified just after the 1982 election, and so I'm not sure who . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What's that? I'm not sure who the minister was. I thought you were. I'm not sure who the minister of Education, maybe it was Pat Smith was the first minister of Education for the Grant Devine government. And so she signed my teacher's licence, which for many teachers is a real pride in terms of getting your teacher's licence. In fact, many people will say, you're an educator, and I would say, no I'm a teacher. You need a licence to be a teacher. Anybody can be an educator, but to be a teacher you need to fulfill the whole requirements around the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Act. And I guess it's a professional designation and only certain people can call themselves teachers.

And I can remember getting that. In fact actually the first one I got was a probationary one because you can apply for one if you haven't finished your training officially but you think you will. But you can get one as a probationary thing so that you can go substitute for a while. And a lot of people go and substitute, and then you would get your full one, and then it was a standard A and a professional. So you would move up, it was essentially a class 4. And it takes . . . And it's a lot of pride to get that. And when you do get one, you want to hold onto it and it's a very meaningful thing.

And so I think this is an interesting thing that this is going to be merged into one. And there's an appeal process. I didn't realize there wasn't one before because I kind of thought there was. Because of course the standard A and professional A, the difference between the two is that with the professional A you had an education degree, and the standard A you just had two years of teachers' college or normal school. And so as people moved up, it was based on the amount of education you had.

And of course this will be very interesting to see how this plays out because I know when we get into master's programs, postgraduate diplomas, all of those things, there's some real issues here. And so I'm looking forward to see how this plays out because I know as I went and got my PGD [postgraduate diploma] I went to class 5. And then when I got my master's it was class 6, but some people would argue that that isn't quite right, that there should've been more consideration, because master's means more than a postgraduate diploma. I'm not sure about that. It was all a lot of work but very important work.

So I'm looking forward to that. And I know for teachers this is a big deal because it also relates to their pay. And so this is not just a simple thing. But I think that teachers will have some interest in this and so how this proceeds.

But I didn't realize that there were issues around appeals, and if there was a problem with the appeal, I'm not sure — the appeal process. So that will be interesting. But I wanted to say that when these changes are made, it's unclear why for many years in Saskatchewan we had two boards, and why did it work, and what's broken, and who brought that forward?

And in this case, you know, I'm not sure if this was put forward by LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents] and the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] and SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association]. And if that was the case . . . And she does talk about, they were initiated in the fall of 2009, and so this will be very important to see what will come out of that. Because clearly these kind of conversations happen all the time, and again particularly as we see new immigrants or people from across Canada coming here.

And that, I hope that this will actually speed up . . . You know, one of the complaints we often hear is that when people come to Saskatchewan and they have the training and the qualifications to teach in their home provinces or their countries, that in fact it's not an easy transition to work in Saskatchewan.

And in fact, many of these people who come . . . And this is just one example. In many ways I'm kind of blue-skying here, because I'm not privy to the initial reasons here. But I can tell you the face of . . . And as I go back to that experience at the Broadway Theatre with this theatre full of young immigrants, clearly they could identify with teachers who may have come with them to this country who can speak their home language or can be a good transition back and forth. So I'm hoping that some of this is that discussion, and the more that we can accommodate the recent immigrants would be wonderful.

So the other issues that we talked about is the *Copyright Act*. That's an interesting piece and we'll be looking forward to that.

The other one that I just want to touch on before I get into some other remarks is the whole issue around the ability to borrow. And I know that we have raised this issue at many times and that in fact we issued a press release about this. But our leader talked about this, and I just want to quote what he had to say about this. And he talked about, this is about borrowing money. This is about borrowing money.

Schools, school boards have to do an awful lot and — as we're getting into — and we have experienced for many years now the idea that we have to update our facilities, build new schools. And we have to build new schools in new places because the demographics are changing. We're seeing population shifts from across the province. And I just want to read what he said, because I think this is really important. He talks about, we have a great deal of difficulty with . . . relates to the method that the Finance minister and the Premier used for accounting before the finances of the province. Particularly the legislation eliminates the ability of the process we've had for many, many years, for school boards and school divisions — whatever the title we're going to use here — can borrow money. And they talked about how they eliminated the use of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board's borrowing rules and how that was done, which we basically use as the interest rates of the province, which we know we have good financial standing for borrowing in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, clearly we have some of the best, or the lowest rates in Canada.

My colleague goes on and says, what this legislation does is for building new schools or for building facilities or purchasing equipment within the school system. This Bill pushes that borrowing out to the commercial lenders, which are higher cost. And so we know that given the amount of money that the whole school system as a whole needs to borrow, this is going to involve millions of dollars in extra money that's going to be required to do the same thing that's being done now. And we haven't had an explanation from the minister.

And we saw clearly that this was happening in Regina where they had to go out and borrow money for working on three new schools. And clearly that's an issue, because we want to make sure that there are no extra costs involved, that if we can do this as efficiently, efficiently — and even to borrow a term from this government — in a lean manner, how can this possibly fit into this lean philosophy of this government when you're forcing other levels of government to . . . or other forms, to borrow money at a higher rate? Now they may have done that before. They may have it in small ways but here you really are making a much bigger deal about it and I think this is really not appropriate. And we haven't heard from the minister a reasonable explanation about why this should be done and why this is a new thing that must be done.

And I'm not sure if the school boards have been advocating for this. Has it been their position that, yes, we would like to borrow money at a higher rate and spend more money that way? I don't know. Maybe it's the same people who, they've been knocking on doors and finding out that they need to spend money, waste money on three more politicians. I don't know. So I think this is a real challenge, and so we have some real issues there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I could take some time to go through the notes

here. And this is very important because we know right off the bat it talks about . . . talking about the school day and the school year and how they're going to do this. And this is just based on, as I said, an online poll by Saskatchewan Tourism, which about 700 — and maybe my math is out there — 700, about 30 per cent of people taking that poll, saying this is a good idea. And all of a sudden we find ourselves with some things changed.

And so then it talks about different things that have been eliminated, that technology supported revolving fund, the educational councils. You know, one of the things about this is that quite often, and we'll see into some of the legislation that we see actual good legislation that's just not been used for many years in particular, and all of a sudden then they cut it. And we think, so why weren't we doing that? Why weren't we? Why weren't we utilizing these educational councils? Why is it that the minister did not use this and now feels that it's the time to actually cut it and go back and take a look and say, isn't there something more that we should be doing?

[16:30]

Now the one that I really wanted to talk about particularly was the operation of schools, section 14 of the new Act. And this is section — the title is operation of schools and focuses on the school year — section 163. And this is what the old or the existing provision is: school year divided into two terms ending December 31st, June 30th. Two semesters could be January 31st, June 30th. It goes through that. School year consists of 200 days, and there you go. And so now they're repealing that.

And it's quite extensive actually, and it's an interesting read because I know this is important. And I don't know, you know, when we have things in regulation, the wording, the access is more difficult than finding it in legislation. Now some may say, no, you can get the regulations. They're pretty easy. And often they are. But the problem is, they're not quite as easily accessible as a piece of legislation, and everybody knows that you follow this. And so this is an important piece that I think is before us.

And what we'll have instead, that section 163 is repealed and substituted with the new wording, and 163, the new section, defines instructional day and requires the boards of education and the conseil scolaire to start the school year after Labour Day. Topic areas will now be covered off in regulations. No change in authority except the number of days in the school year. It just has to say the first instructional day is the first day after Labour Day. And so that's very, that'll be interesting and we'll see how that plays out.

But the one that I wanted to get into was the sections 164 to 167. And the explanation here, the explanation is 164 to 167 are repealed. Details in the sections will be shifted to regulations. So that's it. That's all it says. And so a lot, you know, you have four sections here that are moved to regulations, and that means that in many ways that will be up to either the minister or cabinet to define. And we just hope that there will be some public scrutiny about that, because when you lose that, sometimes these things can, even though they are gazetted and there is some ability, it's not quite the same as being in legislation. Because, you know, you can do regulations in the middle of the summer. You can do them when people are

maybe on holidays. You could do them just prior to the last long weekend in September, end of the summer, and people aren't really paying attention.

But these, these are really important, that we could be allowing this to go over. Because some of these are pretty fundamental. And, you know, for us, the public education system is a pretty basic component of who we think we are and what makes up the Saskatchewan culture, the Saskatchewan society. Because, you know, we value our schools. We really believe in our schools, and in many ways they define who we are both in Saskatchewan and throughout Canada, around the world, because we've educated so many people. And yet some of these things . . . So our education Act has served us well, has served us well.

And so when we take some of these things out of the Act and into regulation, I'm not sure why, and so we need to have that discussion. Is it just, is this part of the lean process that makes things just a little easier to do? I'm not sure. But I'll go through these different provisions because I think that they're important to have on record that they're no longer going to be part of the Act. They're being repealed and they're going to be moved over to regulations. So:

School hours

164(1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4.1), the program of instruction in schools is to be conducted between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon and between 1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on each school day.

(2) On receipt of a request from the board of education or conseil scolaire, the minister may authorize the board of education or the conseil scolaire to conduct classes or other educational activities during periods of each school day other than the periods mentioned in subsection (1).

Now I know, for example, in Saskatoon and in many high schools actually start before 9:00 — 8:25, 8:45 the bells would ring. I know when I was still teaching, our lunch time was 11:45 to 12:30. So you can accommodate local adaptations and that's quite okay. So it seemed to work okay, so I'm not sure why you need to take that out. And of course it goes on:

(3) A board of education or conseil scolaire may alter or shorten the school hours prescribed by subsection (1) by not more than 30 minutes, but may not lengthen the school hours.

(4) With the approval of the minister, a board of education or the conseil scolaire may alter, but not shorten or lengthen, by more than 30 minutes the school hours prescribed by subsection (1).

So the idea is that you would essentially have about, I think it's about five and a half hours of instruction time in a day, and you can't lengthen it by more than half an hour. You could start earlier but you have to finish earlier, or you could work within that. So I think it would be interesting why, you know, I mean, you have something as straightforward as that. And I'll go on to section 4.1:

With the approval of the minister, a board of education or

the conseil scolaire may lengthen by up to 30 minutes the school hours set out in subsection (1), provided that the total hours in the school year, exclusive of the recess hours prescribed in subsections (5) and (6), do not exceed five times the number of school days in the school year determined in accordance with subsection 163(2).

So I don't know. I mean, like what worries me about this when we move this into regulation, that if you have government that's taking stuff out of legislation into regulations, that you really give them a free hand and there's no public accountability. Now they may argue that there is. They will always be able to see the regulations in the *Gazette*, but this kind of thing, if this becomes a habit, then we may see stuff like labour standards coming out of legislation into regulation and they would say, hey trust me.

But if you end up for some reason, and I . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, I have to be honest. I'm not sure I'm seeing reason, but if we sat down we'd probably think of several reasons why parents may be unhappy about this. If all of a sudden they find their kids going to school eight hours a day because of some regulation, I think there's a problem. Here in this gave people, particularly families who have a lot of concern, a lot of care for their children. And we know one of the big debates in rural Saskatchewan is how many hours our children are on a bus, then how many hours are they in their classes. That's a big, that's a big issue. That's a huge issue. And so I'm not sure why this has to be taken out of the Act and moved into the regulation. And of course the explanation is weak; it has just shifted to regulations, and the minister really doesn't address it in her remarks.

Now the other one that I want to talk about, and I think this is one that I feel very strongly about, is each school day must include a recess period of 15 minutes, or recess periods amounting to 15 minutes in the morning and in the afternoon, or a recess period or periods amounting to 30 minutes. So you could have two 15-minute recess breaks, or one of 30 minutes, or I think this is where high schools do it, where they have 5-minute breaks in-between and would add up to about 30 minutes. And I think this is critical. And you know, I mean, and for a whole host of reasons, people need a break. They need time to travel between classes.

But I think that as a teacher we see that sometimes you might get a principal or a staff who say, you know what, kids are misbehaving out on the playground. Let's just get rid of recess. In fact in many ways I would argue, and I have argued in staffs, that we need recess. Kids need to know how to socialize, how to get along together. The idea that you make a school day all one big class is very hard on children. And so when I see this kind of thing happen, the flags go up because I think that there's been a lot of good writers about this. And I think of one in particular, Ken Dryden. Many of us remember Ken Dryden, the famous Montreal goalie who went on to the Toronto Maple Leafs, talks about the importance — did I lose somebody? — that talks about the importance of play, talks about the importance of creativity, the importance of imagination.

And kids, if we interfere too much in their lives and think that, you know, adults know best, this is what you're going to do during recess or we're going to take your recess away from

you, I think that's a real problem. And so I have some real issues with that. And so I think that this is a real problem. And I'll just go on to continue to say . . . I'll close out this section, notwithstanding (5) where a board of education or the conseil scolaire passes a resolution, pupils in any or all schools in the school division or francophone education area, as set out in the resolution of the board of education or the conseil scolaire, may be allowed recess periods other than those set out in (5). And I'm going to be, I guess I could say I'd be interested if those are, but this is not going to happen because they're going to be going into regulations.

And so what I worry about in many ways — and I know this is a concern for parents, it's a concern for teachers, and I think if you had a group full of kids, they'd stick up their hands and say yeah, too — because what we would do in schools that meant so much to the educational experience is all those extracurricular activities and how do you coordinate across the province. How do you coordinate those football games, those volleyball games, those debates, those plays, just even playing touch football or dodge ball at recess — all of those things that make school the kind of place the kids like to be?

When you start changing these things, some of these fundamental things of what we call school — and I don't know, maybe they do this in BC [British Columbia], Manitoba, or Ontario; I don't know — but I would like to know why, why this is going into regulation? Why isn't it good enough to leave it alone? Because I know this is the kind of government that — you noticed last night we were talking about a policy void — they like to do things and like to get things sort of squirrelled away. And I think there's some real issues here.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that I will be having questions. I know I'll have questions on this part here. And as somebody who's worked, you know, both as a parent and as a teacher, I've seen the benefits of the socialization of schools. But what you've got to do is you've got to allow kids to be kids, and they've got to be safe. We've got to worry about those issues around bullying and all of that. Parents and supervisors have a huge role to play to make sure the playground is safe.

But just to say let's get rid of it could be a dilemma. I'm not saying that this is saying that, but I am saying that some of those things that leave us to have some questions: why are you taking this out of the Act? It was good enough in the Act. Now you're taking it out, and particularly in a period of time when you're cutting back in the public service. Will this become a priority for them to think about this in the Ministry of Education or will they be busy doing other things and this will be one of the things that will be put off?

Now the other one that's interesting and again this is section 165(1), holidays, the following days are school holidays:

- (a) Saturdays and Sundays; [that's a good thing]
- (b) Family Day; Good Friday; Canada Day; Labour Day; Thanksgiving Day and Remembrance Day;
- (c) the birthday or day appointed for the celebration of the birth of the reigning Sovereign; and

(d) any day proclaimed as a holiday by the Governor General, the Lieutenant Governor, the mayor of the city, town or village or the reeve of the rural municipality in which a school is situated.

(2) A board of education or the conseil scolaire may declare any other days not exceeding one day at a time to be holidays for school purposes.

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (1), one or more Saturdays may be declared to be school days by resolution of the board of education or the conseil scolaire.

And I think I have some questions about, you know, here we have the Premier saying on one hand he values Labour Day weekend as a main issue, main plank that he wants to talk about in the election but yet is now taking it out of the Act and going to put it into regulations. And I'm not sure why that needs to happen; I don't know why that's happening.

[16:45]

And again the explanation is that details in these sections will be shifted to regulations, and again the same concern I've had before around the idea that a lot of stuff can happen in regulations without any public scrutiny. It can be both for good or bad pressures. This is why we have legislation to withstand some of that pressure, and it's hard sometimes too . . . I mean we're seeing that again, you know, in terms of the three new politicians legislation. And we're going to see that, unfortunately, but I hope that that doesn't even make it much further. So I have some concerns about that.

And this one here — vacations — and I'm not sure how students and families . . . This was in legislation, now it's going to be taken out. It'll be in regulations, if it makes it into regulations. It doesn't say actually, and I'm not even sure, Mr. Speaker, if it says it's going to be in regulations, I don't know how it will be addressed in regulations. But:

(1) The following vacation periods are to be observed:

(a) a Christmas vacation, which is to commence not later than December 23 and end not earlier than January 2, both days inclusive;

(b) a spring vacation, which is to be the five days following Easter Sunday [and I think we've always appreciated that;]

(c) a summer vacation that is at least six consecutive weeks from the last school day in one school year to the first school day in the following school year that ends no later than the first Monday . . .

Now see here we would, we might've had an amendment here but, you know, the idea that summer vacation's now going to be part of a regulation, not part of the legislation, I think that's an issue. And then it goes on to talk about subsection (2) "Notwithstanding clause 1(a), a board of education or the conseil scolaire may extend the Christmas vacation."

Now I think if I was in that Broadway Theatre and asking a group of young people: what do you think about that? They probably would like to see, shall extend the Christmas vacation period. They all, everybody loves that idea. But I know this is something that we wrestle with, but I think that it's important that it is in the Act. And why we're taking it out of the Act, like I say, is an issue.

I think that I am suspicious because there are reasons why we have things in legislation — to protect them, to make sure they stand the test of time, and that they stand the test of scrutiny here in the legislature and in the stakeholders . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, the question is how, did they consult about this? I'm not sure. Are people saying, hey get this out of, get it out of the legislation? We want it to be more flexible?

And I think that as you plan, I know in our family and many other families we kind of like the idea of knowing when school holidays are and they're not going to be kind of up in the air. Now we know one thing for sure, there won't be school before the first Tuesday after Labour Day. That's a for sure. We know it's got to be done by the end of June, but everything in between is kind of up in the air. The times of the day we hope will stay the same, but now it's moving into regulation. So I think that it's going to be interesting to see if, why they're moving it into regulation and whether that regulation is just by order of minister or is it by order of cabinet? Because there's two different ways that can happen too. If it's order by minister, again it may not be quite as transparent.

And of course this is something that this government campaigned on for many campaigns. I think we all like to think we're being transparent and accountable, but this government made a big deal about it in 2007 and 2011. They made a big deal and in fact they make a big deal about keeping their campaign promises. They make a really big deal about that and they're going to take a lot of pride in it. But as I said earlier, we've raised many times that where did this thing come from? Where did it come from on October 27th? Why did this drive this forward?

So these four sections, like many . . . You know, and this is quite a lengthy explanatory note, but it's interesting that when you actually go to look for the explanation, you just get two lines: "Section 164 to 167 are repealed. Details in these sections will be shifted to regulations." It doesn't talk about the transition, doesn't talk about will they be in regulations. Are we seeing the regulations? How will that happen? And I think this is a bit of an issue, and so I'm concerned about this.

I know that many people around the province are wondering with bated breath what's going to happen to our schools? Are they going to be the same kind of schools that we've always had a lot of faith, a lot of belief in that we could send our kids to? Or are things going to be up in the air? Is it going to be much more political, where you can have somebody in a campaign, just a week before the people go to vote, say we're going to start after Labour Day, and have no idea, and the major stakeholders have no idea that this was coming down this way?

You know, you might have said it in a way, we want to consult about this. We want to talk about the new school year because we think this is an important issue. And he would have had, I

think, a lot of interest as we . . . And when I talked about the CBC poll, a lot of people registered their concerns, but many thought it was a good idea. And as I have said, Mr. Speaker, that for many reasons, I think there is a lot of merit in it. But as I said that, in many ways, it's a half-baked idea, and the reasons for doing it are not very strong because of . . .

I would have really enjoyed or really appreciated and thought, if they would've said, this is about kids doing better in school, this would have been a very interesting idea. And we're going to do as much as we can to get kids in school on the first day because it's a lot easier to do it after Labour Day because you have kids who, families that are vulnerable, that are dealing with rent, dealing with all sorts of issues; maybe parents in terms of, again, tourism or whatever, coming back from work, and they're not coming back to work till after Labour Day. So in a lot of ways this makes some sense.

But I think it should have been framed around the idea that we're doing this for children. We want our children to achieve and to learn in our schools because we believe in our schools. And what makes our schools work so well. It's not just the instructional time, it's not just the first day — even though those things count for an awful lot — it's about having great teachers. It's about having the resources and having a school that has the proper functioning heat in it, sometimes, you know, all those issues, and not being too long in a school bus — all those things. There's a lot of, a whole lot of pressures on a school and a school system that make it really special.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I value my time that I've taught in schools. I've taught 18 years, seven years in a rural school and it was a fantastic time. It was up in the Meadow Lake School Division. And I learned a lot about the pressures that schools face in terms of time and what it means for a school year. And kids love to come back to school. But I think that we need to send a strong signal that school's about kids and that we care about kids. That's our number one priority and that their learning is really, really critical.

And we know that how we deal with the instructional day, how we deal with the school year, are really pivotal and they're pivotal in the sense of stability, predictability and stability. You know, these are things that really matter to families and they can get behind their local schools when they know what the school year's all about and what the school day is all about. And their kids aren't coming home too tired, but they're coming home thrilled with being in an education setting that's helping them get their literacy tools, learning their math, all of those things. And I think this piece of legislation has really, really missed the boat on this and it's really unfortunate.

And I can, as many others have talked about in terms of, you know, when you do legislation, one of the big challenges we have is making sure that we anticipate what the consequences are of the legislative changes. And sometimes we don't like to hear what those consequences may be.

And we've talked about the unintended consequences, but it should give us second thought and that's why we trust the civil servants to tell us, if you do this, this is what may happen, and this is also what may happen. And of course it's then up to the politicians then to decide if they want to bear that risk because

ultimately we're elected to take responsibility for any of the changes that we bring forward. It's not up to, you know, at the end of the day, we can't say, let's do a redo on this and if we were, that would be not a good thing because there's just too many people, as we say, there's about 250,000 people in our province that are 18 and younger, so that means in our school system there's probably a couple of hundred thousand students who . . . This has a huge impact.

And so when we do it for the simple reason of extending a holiday, that may be a good idea. I, like anybody else, value holidays. Everybody needs a good holiday every once in a while. But I think that we've got to do it for the right reasons. And that's why we've always looked at Saskatchewan schools as a real leader in terms of producing results for kids — and not just for the wealthy children, not just for those who are in the affluent brackets, but also those who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances.

We've done an awful lot in terms of leadership around community schools, both in terms of the urban milieu of Regina and Saskatoon, but right across this province. And we've really seen some really innovative way to engage students, to make them part of their learning. But what we haven't done is we haven't really messed with some of the fundamental structures of the school year or the school day.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that we will have some questions about this, and I hope that there's an appropriate amount of time that we can go through this. I know many of my colleagues will have some questions on this. Many will want to talk more about the financial aspect of this Bill; they will want to talk about the copyright aspect of this — all of those things.

But I wanted to forward my couple of ideas, particularly around what I saw in Chicago around first day and the impact it had on Chicago learning, and how important that is when you have such a huge school system that it was really important to think outside the box. And I think, and as a teacher and a parent and an MLA, I think it's very important that we do think outside the box.

But when we do that, we'd better, when we come to the Chamber, the floor of the Chamber, when we bring legislation, we better make sure that we have all our i's dotted and all our t's crossed. Otherwise we could end in doing some things, some of those unintended consequences that I think have huge, huge impacts.

You know, when I talked briefly about Ken Dryden, the value of play, what it means for children, and how it means an awful lot to be in a school and being able to have young people around the same age, developing those friendships, it's huge. So if we're talking about monkeying around with recess, I have an issue with that. But now I won't be able to, because that will be in regulations. I won't have the same ability to make comment on that.

And so when we see these kind of changes, it's a huge worry for me. And I think that when you have commentators making remarks about these kind of things and talking about what are the basic components of a happy, healthy school, one of them is what happens during the school day. And whether you're

playing basketball, playing football, playing marbles, or playing dodge ball or just hanging out with your friends, what happens at the school is a big, big issue.

And so when we started this train down the tracks, as the minister did right off the bat about saying this Bill is all about delivering the Premier's promise to start school after Labour Day, I think there's a lot here that we need to talk about. So with this, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on this Bill. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate of Bill No. 27, *The Education Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Why is the House Leader on his feet? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader 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: — This House stands adjourned to 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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