



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

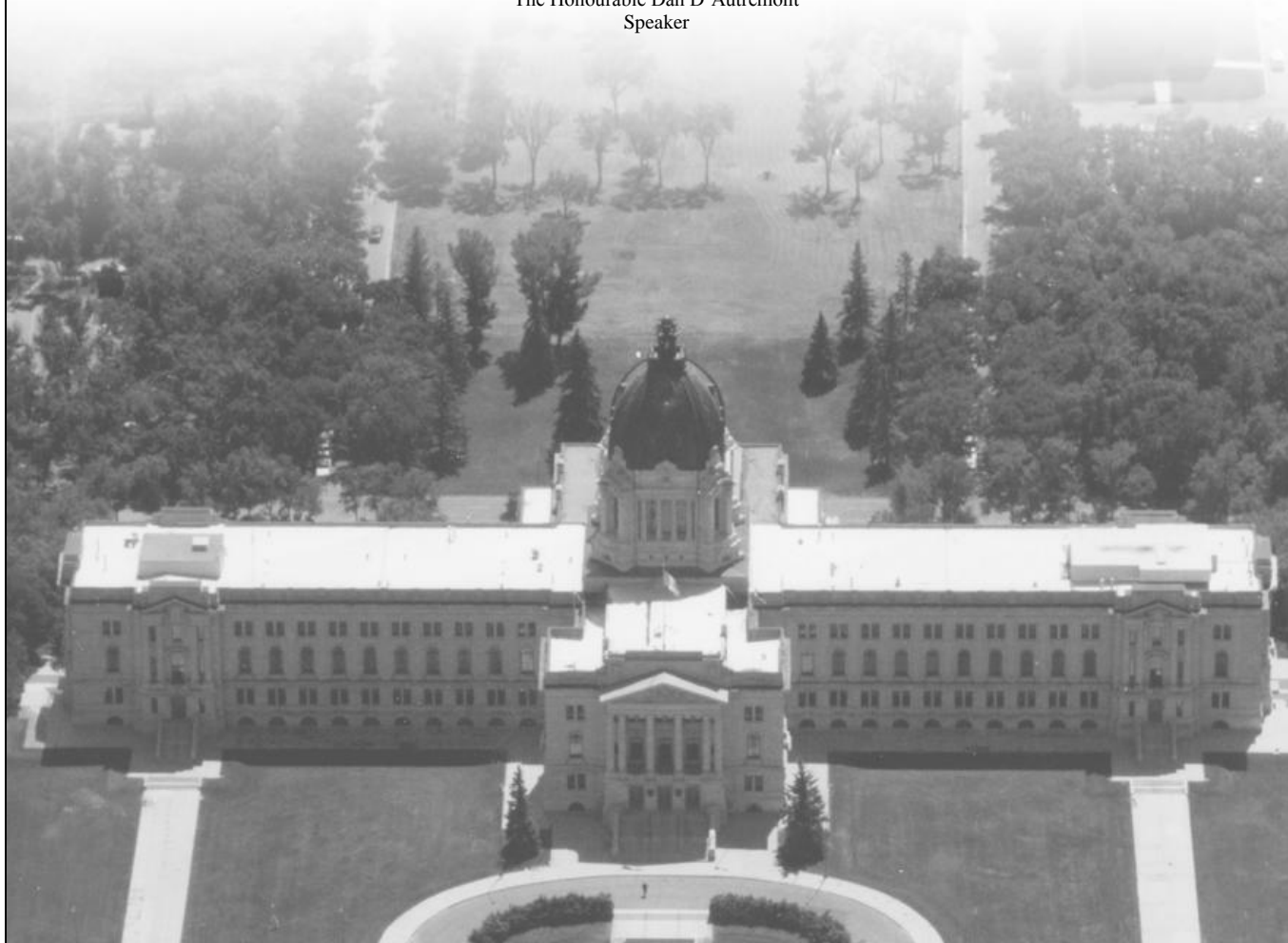
of the

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D’Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Jurgens, Victoria	SP	Prince Albert Northcote
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lawrence, Greg	SP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
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 Cypress Hills.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I take great pride in introducing some honoured guests in your gallery, seated in the front row of your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

We have a delegation here from the Republic of Indonesia, and as you may know, Indonesia has become not just an important friend but also a very substantial customer for products that we export from Saskatchewan. Indonesia is the second largest customer for the potash that we produce locally, and they are also a big importer of wheat. So they've got the two primary products that we produce covered, and we appreciate their business.

With us today, and I would ask the individuals to stand as I recognize them, the consul general of the Republic of Indonesia, Julang Pujianto. And I'm sorry; I warned him before this that I might have that bit of a problem. The consul for social, cultural affairs is Sudarsono Soedirlan. And we have accompanying these two gentlemen, Ms. Djatu Riyanda Primadini, and she's the vice-consul for Economy.

I would like all members of this Legislative Assembly to make our guests warmly welcome today.

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

Mr. Nilson: — On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome the guests from Indonesia. One of the facts about Indonesia that always is important I think for us to remember is that Indonesia is the country in the world with the most Muslims of any other country in the world. And they are great international traders, great business people, and have done that for millennia, I think would be the best way to describe it.

And so we're very pleased to have Indonesia here in Saskatchewan as traders, but we're also very pleased to have in our community immigrants from Indonesia who are strong leaders in our Muslim communities in Saskatchewan. And I also would say that there's a lot of Lutherans in Indonesia as well. It has one of the largest Lutheran churches in the world. And so I know that there's much interaction on that level as well. So I very much welcome you to Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my pleasure today to welcome 20 public servants who are in the Speaker's gallery today. They're here to take part in the parliamentary program for the public service.

The participants are from the following ministries: Agriculture; Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; Environment; Health; Municipal Affairs; Public Service Commission; and Social Services.

They're going to have a tour of the Legislative Assembly, and they'll have briefings from the Legislative Library, the Office of the Clerk, and Executive Council. They'll meet with members from both sides of the House, and they'll have a meeting with the Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm asking all members in the legislature to help me welcome these very valuable public servants to their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the minister in welcoming the public servants to their Legislative Assembly. On behalf of the official opposition, it's my pleasure to later on meet with the individuals here on the tour, and I had that opportunity last time. It was a most interesting experience and exchange, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to it on behalf of the official opposition later this afternoon. So again, I join with the minister and ask all members to welcome these public servants to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to introduce in the west gallery today 14 grade 11 and 12 students from Glaslyn Central School. Just give us a wave up there. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Brian Goota, and chaperones, Mervin Pritchett and Carol-Lee Allan. And they are here this afternoon to watch the proceedings, and I'll be meeting with them later. They've travelled five hours to be here. They are from the furthest northeast corner of my constituency, and I would like everybody to welcome them here today.

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

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of this Assembly, I'm honoured to present three visitors to you, to the Assembly, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago I attended the graduation ceremony, a very unique graduation ceremony, on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education, called the targeted initiative for older workers program. In our gallery are Christine McConnell and her husband, Bruce — Christine is the coordinator of the program — and recent graduate, Vivian Lutzko.

There were 13 graduates of this program, Mr. Speaker, and it's just an example of the kind of programming that exists in our province for education. It's never too late to get an education. We're very proud of that. Vivian has since been hired, and we're extremely excited about that. So I'd like all members of this Assembly to help me welcome them to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced

Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent of Saskatoon Greystone, Mr. Robin Bellamy.

And many will know Mr. Bellamy for his variety of work that contributes mightily to not just Saskatoon but right across the province. He's involved with a number of educational initiatives. He's involved with a number of philanthropic initiatives. He's also not simply focusing on local communities, which he works tirelessly to help enhance, but he also is one of our key informal but very, very vital ambassadors with the Philippines. And so to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd invite all members of this Assembly to welcome Mr. Bellamy to his Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I can introduce 33 grade 7, 8, and 9 students from the terrific community of Colonsay. They're accompanied today with their teachers Brian Cowan, Joanne Helemkey, and Lisa Eger, as well as the chaperone of Michelle Halvorson. So I would like all members to help me welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I see in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a friend of mine. Mr. David Bowman has joined us here this afternoon. Now David's family is well known in the province of Saskatchewan, and many will know of a school in Saskatoon named after his grandfather, that being Aden Bowman school, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, David is actually a constituent of the member for Regina Coronation Park, although he worked on my campaign extensively last fall. And I think he just got the surnames mixed up and kept coming to the wrong campaign. So I appreciate all of his help. But please help me in welcoming David to his Legislative Assembly.

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 greater protection for 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, Saskatchewan, alone and unprotected from intruders. And we know that armed robberies such as one that took place in Regina in January and several that took place in Saskatoon over the months of February, March, and as recently as just two nights ago, Jimmy's law is much needed.

We know British Columbia and other provinces have brought several safety precautions through law, including a requirement

that workers cannot be alone during late night, early morning hours. And if they are required to work, there must be protective barriers such as locked doors and protective glass. 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.

And the people who have signed this petition come from Moose Jaw and 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 both the management and accounting of our provincial finances. And 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 the 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 Carnduff and Yellow Grass. I so submit.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who call on the Sask Party government to support and pass the Saskatchewan 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 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.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

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 for 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 to cause the government to review the current legislation and regulations with respect to trapping regulations and firearm use in consultation with the traditional resource users.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by many good people of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

National Volunteer Week

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twelve and a half million Canadians dedicate their time each year to continue a rich history of volunteering and community involvement. I'm proud to stand before the Assembly today and recognize these volunteers who are so central to their communities and our great province.

Mr. Speaker, volunteerism results in a positive change in many different ways. Canadians spend their time supporting community health care, sports and recreation, heritage and arts, environmental protection and advocacy, disaster relief, international development, and firefighting, just to name a few.

This week marks the 68th annual National Volunteer Week, and the celebration represents the nation's largest recognition of volunteers and civic participation. In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Social Services works with 195 community-based organizations comprised of volunteer boards that play key roles in the delivery of important services.

As well the province has 250 housing authorities made up of volunteer boards and 270 volunteer-based community housing organizations that include church housing groups and local seniors' lodges.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have a reputation for dedicated volunteerism. They have led the nation in volunteerism rates on many occasions and are driven by their desire to contribute to their communities, share their experiences and skills, support friends, and help those in need.

Please join me in applauding the work of volunteers nationwide and particularly our Saskatchewan friends who do so much to enhance our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today in recognition of Yom Hashoah, also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day, to commemorate the lives of the 6 million Jewish people who died horrifically in the Holocaust between 1933 and 1945.

On this day, Mr. Speaker, many people in Canada, including those with Jewish ancestry or connections, hold ceremonies and events to remember Holocaust victims whose lives were so tragically taken away during this incredibly dark period of modern history. The two Jewish congregations in my riding are holding their ceremonies on Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, these ceremonies not only allow us pause and honour these 6 million individuals and their families left behind, but they remind us of the horrors of state-sanctioned hatred and genocide, of anti-Semitism, of inaction in the face of mass atrocity, of the demonization and defaming of our fellow human beings, and of the culture of impunity.

It's up to us, Mr. Speaker, as members of a free, open, and diverse society to ensure that these lessons learned from the Holocaust, and other genocides, are passed on to future generations. We can do this, Mr. Speaker, by listening to the stories of survivors, by passing on these stories to current and future generations, and by attending ceremonies and by lighting candles for Holocaust victims.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me today in remembering those 6 million people who came before us. We must pledge that we will never be silent or indifferent in the face of evil. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Moose Jaw Field House and Mosaic Place

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to extol on the virtues of the Moose Jaw Field House and Mosaic Place. These amazing facilities have created a new and exciting vibe in Moose Jaw, from ultimate Frisbee at the Field House to TSN [The Sports Network] broadcasting the Capital One Canada Cup curling classic this November. We've had our inaugural concert with Canadian country music star, Paul Brandt, and as of today there are two more in the queue including rock legend John Mellencamp.

For those of you not yet to visit these remarkable facilities, seriously, what are you waiting for? The attendance of the average Warrior game is now 3,800, which is double what it was at the Crushed Can. The Field House has just added batting

cages and a driving range, and in June of this year our own Saskatchewan Roughriders will be having a training day there. I considered joining them but didn't want to embarrass the team with my athletic prowess.

While the committee members are too many to name, I'd like to mention Shelley Jones and Bill Deyo, Co-Chairs of the Moose Jaw Multiplex Builders Inc., on receiving the 2011 Citizens of the Year. To quote Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatoon Literacy Volunteer Receives Award

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, on March 1st, Read Saskatoon held their Read 'n' Feed Celebrity Auction fundraiser where they presented the Sylvia Vicq Tutor Award to Julie Gregorash.

The Sylvia Vicq Tutor Award recognizes a tutor who goes above and beyond the tutoring expectations. Learners at Read Saskatoon often tell staff how appreciative they are of their tutors and of the impact they've had on their lives. This award allows Read Saskatoon to recognize all of the wonderful work their volunteer tutors do and lets them know that they're contributing to building a strong community.

Julie Gregorash was nominated by Lawrence Smokeyday who's been the recipient of Julie's tutoring. He wrote in his nomination:

Next month is a year that we've been working together. She is a great tutor. We joke around a lot. It relieves a lot of tension and stress. She gives me solid, confident feedback. She says lots, "It's up to you, Lorne." I get to make the decisions. She means a lot to me — she has started to figure out my weaknesses. She's my second gift, my second chance.

Julie Gregorash is a great example of Read Saskatoon's focus, not just on words but literacy — reading, writing, speaking, listening, and numeracy. By providing these foundational skills with qualified staff and trained volunteers, Read Saskatoon is helping people like Lawrence Smokeyday reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Read Saskatoon for all the important work their staff and volunteers do every day and in particular, Julie, on receiving Read Saskatoon's Vicq Tutor Award. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Environmental Engineering and Design Collaboration

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a recent collaboration between the University of Regina, the city of Yorkton, Communities of Tomorrow, and Agmar International Marketing.

These partners have collaborated on the design of a new client-based, experiential learning class in environmental engineering and design, pairing the needs of the city of Yorkton with the skill set of the U of R engineering students. Through this class three groups of University of Regina engineering students will compete to provide solutions to the environmental waste disposal challenges facing the city of Yorkton.

The student projects assess the waste streams, identify the destination of their products to be recycled, assess the financial viability and stability of the markets for the recycled materials, and assess the earth-friendliness of the recycling process and products in Saskatchewan.

Yorkton is a great choice for this project, Mr. Speaker, and has a long history when it comes to collaboration in developing waste and recycling solutions. We are currently known for having possibly the most successful and comprehensive recycling program in the province, due to the work done over the past 20 years through partnerships with the city of Yorkton, the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, the Yorkton Kinsmen, the Prairie Harvest at risk youth employment program, and Ottenbreit Sanitation Services Ltd.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I'd like to congratulate these partners for applying research to find real life solutions and for focusing on public policy issues of importance to the province. Congratulations to the University of Regina, the city of Yorkton, Communities of Tomorrow, and Agmar International Marketing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and I am honoured on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan to rise today and join in the conversation.

The 2012 campaign provides an effective way for communities and individuals to become involved in learning how to respect one another in order to prevent sexual violence. This campaign will bring awareness to the impact of cultural messages and the importance of equality while teaching about respect and consent, healthy sexuality, family planning, and sexual relations that are free from violence and coercion.

The Government of Saskatchewan provides resources that help to address the root causes of sexual violence, including information, referral, and education initiatives. As well services for victims of these crimes are available. Sexual assault services include a 24-hour crisis telephone line, direct support including accompanying the victim to medical or legal appointments, counselling for victims, and compensation and video conferencing to allow vulnerable victims to testify outside their courtroom. This range of sexual assault services is provided throughout the province by various community service organizations in conjunction with the government.

I would like to invite my colleagues in the Assembly to please

join me in thanking all the ladies and gentlemen who work hard to educate on respect and consent, and console the victims of this terrible crime. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Saskatchewan Budget

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to remind the opposition that now with both Manitoba and Prince Edward Island governments recently tabling deficit budgets, that Saskatchewan remains the only province in Canada with a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's NDP [New Democratic Party] government is raising taxes and is planning to sell off provincial assets. They'll also be expanding the PST [provincial sales tax] to more goods and services, the third such expansion since the year 2000. Even with these increases to taxes, Manitoba's NDP government is still projecting a deficit of \$460 million, virtually unchanged from last year's projected deficit.

In sharp contrast, Mr. Speaker, your Saskatchewan Party government has presented a balanced budget without raising taxes. It's no wonder that a recent national poll found that 84 per cent of people surveyed in Saskatchewan have a positive outlook about the economy, which reflects yet another disconnect from this opposition NDP and the people of our province.

Our economy remains strong and growing, and our balanced budget will help keep it that way. Mr. Speaker, I understand the NDP don't like us talking about a balanced budget because, based on their platform, they would have spent us into a deficit. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to balanced budgets and keeping the Saskatchewan advantage.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Electoral Representation

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked the Premier if he had consulted with the Children's Advocate about the legislation to exclude those young people under 18 from the electoral boundaries calculations, he didn't answer. He let the Minister of Justice stand up and say they've "agreed to disagree" with the Children's Advocate.

Now Mr. Pringle co-chaired and facilitated the Premier's CBO [community-based organization] summits. He co-chaired the province's task force on housing authority. He was appointed the Chair of the independent child welfare panel. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party supported the recommendations that came from these panels and task force. So why are they choosing to ignore the good advice from the Children's Advocate on the issue of excluding young people from the electoral boundaries calculations?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to answer the question. I had indicated yesterday that we have enormous respect for the Children's Advocate. Mr. Pringle has done very good work on a variety of different issues, but on this particular one, we have agreed to disagree.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise the members opposite that our goal is part of this process, and I think they have agreed on people that will be appointed to the Boundaries Commission so that we can come out of this with constituencies that have as close to equal representation as we possibly can. And with due respect to the children in our province, we think the appropriate count is the number of people that are going to vote in that province. Mr. Speaker, the children of our province will be very well served and continue to be very well served by the basis of the services and the things that are provided to them through our schools, through the Department of Social Services, through our various programs that are there, and we will continue to work with them on that basis.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there's a disturbing pattern that's forming with this government. The Premier failed to consult with the film industry before he tackled and took away the film tax credit. He failed to consult with the tourism industry when they moved towards a Crown corporation instead of an arm's-length agency like Tourism Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's going to waste millions of dollars on three more MLAs when just about everyone in the province is telling him we don't need three more MLAs. And now they're refusing to listen to the advice from the Children's Advocate when he says, "It's my opinion that this proposed amendment is contrary to the interests of children and youth." My question to the Premier: who did he consult about this decision to exclude the young people?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we just went through an election with highly disproportionate numbers in the various constituencies. I'd indicated earlier my own constituency of Saskatoon Southeast had some 16,343 voters in it. The member from Saskatoon Centre had approximately 7,000. Come the next election, I want to be able to look those voters in the eye, and I want to be able to tell them that we have done the best possible job at realigning and recounting the number of voters so that we ensure that every vote counts exactly the same amount.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the children in this province, we will ensure that they are well cared for and well protected, unlike the members opposite, because if they wanted to consult with the children in this province, they would have to go to Alberta because that's where they drove them.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's curious that the member opposite refers to the last election and the issues that took place

there because this did not show up anywhere in the election platform of the Sask Party. Mr. Speaker, the government's refusal to listen to good advice costs Saskatchewan people money. The Sask Party failed to listen to people who told them that Bill 5 was a violation of the Canadian Constitution. As a result, Saskatchewan was condemned by the International Labour Organization, and eventually the Court of Queen's Bench has ruled Bill 5 unconstitutional.

My question to the Premier: how much did it cost Saskatchewan people because the Saskatchewan Party refused to listen to good advice?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we all obtain legal opinions. The legal opinion that we have obtained in this regard we feel is valid, and we feel that the process that we are taking will stand up to scrutiny of the courts.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the numbers of voters in this province, we will continue to focus on that. The constituency of Athabasca had some 6,511 voters, the constituency of Cumberland, 8,726 — just over 14,200, still less than the number of voters in Saskatoon Southeast. So combined those constituencies don't count for the same thing that they do in Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Speaker, we will work to ensure that this is fair and equitable, and we will ensure that the citizens of our province have a good, fair, and well-balanced electoral system, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has just informed the House that he has legal opinions that support this particular piece of legislation, Bill 36. I would ask the minister to table those legal opinions so the people of Saskatchewan can see the advice that has been received by this government.

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we obtain legal opinions on all the legislation that we prepare. We do not file it, but we have done a careful and will continue to do a careful job in preparing legislation that will well and adequately serve the residents of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that the voices of our children are heard. We do not want the voices of our children to be heard from Calgary or Alberta. We want them heard here by virtue of them having good job opportunities in our province and by virtue of them having good success in our province.

Mr. Speaker, that government spent many years driving children away from this province. We'll not take advice from them on how to treat children in our province.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate said that he has legal opinions that suggest that not including young people under the age of 18 in the equation that will be used to draw up the new electoral boundaries could be a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Canadian Constitution. He said, "I've got access to legal advice that I believe compelled me to try and suggest to the government of Saskatchewan that we do not support this particular amendment."

The minister says that he and the government disagree with this. My question to the Premier: what will it cost Saskatchewan people if the Sask Party gets it wrong here as well?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite used to have this position at one time in the past. He is very well aware of the capabilities of the people that work within the Ministry of Justice. They are some of the finest constitutional lawyers in Canada. They will work well to ensure that the Bill is appropriately and carefully drafted. It has taken place already. The Bill is before the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members of this House and the citizens of this province that that Bill has received careful scrutiny, and we believe it will stand up to every possible court challenge, Mr. Speaker. We do not believe there will be a court challenge. People are entitled to express an opinion but, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is good law and it adequately serves the people of this province and it ensures that there will be a fair and equitable distribution for voting in the next election.

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

Mental Health Care Services

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health care is a huge concern for our province, but it's largely ignored, Mr. Speaker, when the government is making its decisions. I keep hearing, Mr. Speaker, from individuals who are suffering from mental health care issues and individuals who work in the mental health care field that we've a long way to go in this province in order to provide appropriate mental health care.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I recently heard some troubling stories about individuals from people working in the mental health care sector, individuals who needed mental health care, tried to access services and care, Mr. Speaker, at the Dubé Centre in Saskatoon but were turned away because of overcapacity in the system.

My question to the minister, my specific question to the minister: does he know how often those in need of mental health care services are turned away because of overcapacity in the system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the issue of mental health and the delivery of mental health services within the province is a regional health authority. Having said that, we fund regional health authorities, but they are the deliverer of the services across the whole province, whether it's the health regions in southern Saskatchewan or the two northern health regions. It is always a challenge to make sure that we have the proper services supplied.

We don't have necessarily a code knowing when people are going to be coming in or when they're going to be having some mental health challenges. So it is always a sliding scale, Mr. Speaker. The system goes through times where it's right up to capacity and times where there is some vacancy, Mr. Speaker. But what I will say is that the health regions work very hard to supply the appropriate level of mental health services across the province to ensure that people that are vulnerable at this time receive the services that they need.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health care challenges are especially problematic when they affect individuals that are poor and individuals that are homeless. One of the causes to do with capacity challenges in the mental health care system is the fact that there's not nearly enough mental health care spaces in the community. So when individuals are in a facility such as the Dubé Centre, often they have to stay there longer than they would need to because there are not spaces or safe and reliable places where they're able to go in the community.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have taken urgent action on certain issues. In recent days we have seen government business cleared in order to push through more politicians. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that requires urgent action, real urgent action. So my question to the minister: when will he take urgent action in order to increase the number of mental health care spaces in the community?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, again we defer to the regional health authorities that deliver care at that level. The member opposite talked about the Irene and Les Dubé Centre for mental health in Saskatoon, which is a shining example of both provincial government and private donors. Irene and Les Dubé as well as Merlis Belsher who put millions of dollars into that facility, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that people that are suffering from mental health have a state-of-the-art facility that is on the banks of the Saskatchewan River — a very tranquil setting, Mr. Speaker, an absolute gem, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, there is always more that we can do, especially on the community level, so that people, when they receive services in a centre like that, then can go back into the community and have support. We work closely with the health regions to make sure that support is available throughout the province.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, while we know that mental health care issues and concerns are great in our larger cities, we know they can be even worse and more problematic in rural areas, remote areas, and in northern Saskatchewan. And members in the Assembly and the public have heard the members from Athabasca and Cumberland speak about the unique challenges facing northern communities. Having recently been in the North, Mr. Speaker, I heard first-hand about the need for increased services and supports for those living in the North, especially to deal with the issue of youth suicide.

So my question to the minister is this: will he commit today to develop a comprehensive mental health strategy for the province with a very strong focus on northern Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous answers, that there is always more that we can do. Building capacity within in the communities is extremely important, Mr. Speaker. But I am very proud of this government and the commitment that we have made to mental health services in the province. We had a provincial hospital, the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, that is 100 years old, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has not only made the commitment and talked about replacement of that hospital, but we've moved that project along, Mr. Speaker, with actual money — a far cry from when the opposition was in government, Mr. Speaker. I remember the member from North Battleford saying they put money towards the project. We came to government. No money had moved across, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely shameful. That facility was deteriorating for decades, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP. This government has a strong commitment to mental health, and you can see it in the new hospital in the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked the minister what specific and urgent action he was going to take in order to increase the number of beds in the community so that places like the Dubé Centre, Mr. Speaker, can do the job that they do so well, but can service and help more people in the province. I asked the minister, Mr. Speaker, if he would commit today to develop a provincial mental health strategy so that there's a comprehensive strategy for the province with a strong focus on northern Saskatchewan, but he did not answer that question. I ask him again, Mr. Speaker: will he commit today to develop a provincial mental health strategy with a strong focus on northern Saskatchewan? Will he do that today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, what I would say to that member is that we wouldn't have to start today. We are working with health regions and have been working with health regions for the last four and a half years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is, sure, more work to be done. And we know that when we made the announcement regarding the provincial hospital in North Battleford, we also knew that that was only one part of the overall strategy for mental health. We need to continue to work with health regions to ensure that they have the proper services, as well as CBOs that offer great services throughout our province, Mr. Speaker, on the community level. It is a continuum of care, Mr. Speaker, that is needed. We are working with that over the last four and a half years. I think we've made some great strides. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, there is still more work to do.

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

Agricultural Issues

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is still reeling from the effects of the Harper government's recent budget. We continue to have questions about the negative impacts on Saskatchewan farmers and producers. One of the casualties of the cuts is the PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] shelterbelt program in Indian Head. A recent independent study has estimated the public good from this program over a 20-year period was \$600 million and that the trees planted in 2004 alone will sequester 1.8 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2054. My question to the minister: what is his plan to assure that this essential program will be continued for the farmers of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we also have concerns what will happen to the Indian Head tree nursery at Indian Head. And one of the subjects that I'll be talking to my federal counterpart on Friday is how that transition will work, and we will have more information on that at the time.

But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that in the agriculture sector right now there's more optimism than there has been for many, many years out there, whether it comes where the community pastures that the federal government is handing down to the province. I think producers, as late as the other night when the Saskatchewan cattle association was, actually held a reception in here, the positive atmosphere that was there. And the concern that they had is that they wanted to make sure that the community pastures would stick with the producers out there and they would have the first choice of those pastures.

We agree with the producers out there. And I think the member opposite would agree with that, that we will make sure that producers come first, as they have in the first four and a half years under our government.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The producers I spoke to the other night at the event also expressed actually quite a few concerns about the community pasture program and that it not be sold off, that it be retained by the Government of Saskatchewan. And they're very concerned about a potential

sale of those pastures which could destroy the work that's been done by PFRA for those so many decades, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the agroforestry issue and the shelterbelts that have been established by the PFRA, there's a specialist named Doug Macaulay from Alberta who, he's an agroforestry specialist. And he said that the agricultural world is showing renewed enthusiasm for shelterbelts, that they have the potential to return value far beyond the initial investment, that the PFRA shelterbelt program is home to the tools and corporate knowledge of the shelterbelt systems that work best for Saskatchewan farmers.

A 2010 PFRA publication endorsed by Minister Ritz says that history shows that the centre is as relevant to the protection of Canada's landscape today as it was more than a hundred years ago. A mere two years later, the federal minister states there's no more need for this program despite what the experts are saying.

My question to the minister: does he agree with the specialist that this program is important for Saskatchewan farmers, and is he prepared to continue it now that it has been abandoned by the federal government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member opposite that the Indian Head nursery has played an important part of a role in agriculture right across this province for many, many years. And that's ongoing; it still plays an important part. And I think we will be passing our concerns on to the federal minister of what happens to that tree nursery, whether it . . . From the comments that I've seen the federal minister make, that he's hoping that the private sector will take that over. And we certainly hope that someone will take that nursery over and still provide that service to producers.

We do know though that the private sector does now sell trees to farmers and acreages right across rural Saskatchewan out there and are providing some of those services. But we will certainly be talking to the federal minister about our concerns. And again I agree with the member opposite that the service they provided for many years has been very important when starting farmyards or shelterbelts around rural Saskatchewan, and we're certainly going to pass along those concerns to the federal minister.

[14:15]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the fact that the minister is willing to pass on those concerns to the minister, and we look forward to what the federal minister has to say about this. But not only the experts are critical of this decision, but the pundits have weighed in as well. Bruce Johnstone has pointed out:

But there's ample evidence to suggest that prolonged use of zero till has . . . hardened the Prairie soil, which will

result in increased tillage, leading to more soil erosion and loss of soil moisture . . . with climate change, the Prairies will become hotter and drier . . . and trees help to keep that moisture on the land.

In today's *Leader-Post*, Murray Mandryk questioned how the minister came to the conclusion that the goals have been met. He said:

Met its goals? What goals? Who did Ritz talk to when he came to this startling conclusion? Was it today's farmers, who are now rightfully annoyed that a sound and relatively cost-efficient farm support program has just been sacrificed in the name of past Conservative government budget deficits?

The question to the minister that I have, Mr. Speaker, is this: does he agree with the pundits and the agroforesters that Saskatchewan farmers need access to a shelterbelt program, or is he once again blindly supporting the ill-advised and regressive actions of his Conservative friends in Ottawa?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite and the pundits that think there's so much pessimism going on in the agriculture sector, I've got to inform the member opposite that she should listen to the Saskatchewan cattle association. She should listen to farmers across this province. Many on this side actually have farms in the province of Saskatchewan, and we haven't seen times like this for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, under the 16 years previous under an NDP government I can see how they got that attitude, how that pessimism flourished because they paid no attention to rural Saskatchewan. And that's why we represent every rural riding in the province of Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, for the member's information, I can't see that changing any time soon.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Plans for Provincial Highways

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party has lots of spin and PR [public relations], but they're just spinning their wheels when it comes to fixing our highways.

The CAA's [Canadian Automobile Association] campaign on highways has seen more than 1,600 votes for the worst highway, Mr. Speaker. And a lot of people in Saskatchewan want to see better highways, not more politicians, Mr. Speaker. With record revenue, it's a shame to see what we have — crumbling highways, potholes big enough to lose a vehicle, and unsafe driving conditions throughout the province.

To the minister: with record revenues, why are people still referring to our highways as gravel goat paths?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — The short answer first, Mr. Speaker: because, Mr. Speaker, under 16 years of NDP rule, they did nothing for highways. Mr. Speaker, as far as the member's comments about more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I find this just a bit surprising because I'm sure he's on record in *Hansard* as supporting more MLAs in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize we inherited a massive infrastructure deficit. There are a lot of bad highways in this province, Mr. Speaker. We, during the 2007 election campaign, we committed to \$1.8 billion if we were given the privilege to serve as government. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite laughed at that. They scoffed. They said it couldn't be done. Mr. Speaker, not only did we do that, we exceeded it. We spent over \$2.2 billion on highways in our first term.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there's a lot of work left to be done, but we've made a good start. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what's disappointing? In 2007 Highway 22 was lined up to be fixed, and the Sask Party took office and did nothing, Mr. Speaker. They've axed it from the five-year plan and let it get worse and worse for the people of the Southey region. And here five years later, the highway is nominated for the worst goat trail in the West, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Highways department planned to have it done, but the Saskatchewan Party hasn't even started. It's a complete failure, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the minister to park his rhetoric. And my question again to the minister is, why did the minister fail to follow through on the plan to get the job done on Highway No. 22?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, directly to Highway No. 22: we recognize the deplorable condition it's in. Mr. Speaker, it's on our five-year capital plan. Some of the advance work is already being done. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that that needs to get fixed.

But as far as the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, saying that they had it lined up to be done, it's funny, Mr. Speaker, how the year before an election they have a lot of things lined up to be done. Mr. Speaker, they were committing federal money that didn't exist to a new bridge in Prince Albert before this last election. Mr. Speaker, that member opposite's a former minister of Highways and he never . . . He did nothing, virtually, during his entire tenure.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there is an awful lot of work left to be done but, Mr. Speaker, we're getting to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 38 — *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012*

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

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012*. The active families benefit is a proven success, and I would like to take this opportunity here today to acknowledge the impact the initiative has had already and to make sure that we expand the age range that it covers. That's something that can make a good program even better, Mr. Speaker.

Now the active families benefit was first introduced four years ago by our government. It was Bill No. 33, *An Act respecting an Active Families Benefit, 2008*. Its intent was to encourage the development of healthy, active families to increased access to culture, sport, and recreation activities. The purpose of *The Active Families Benefit Act* was to help families with the cost of their children's participation in cultural, recreational, and sport activities as mentioned, Mr. Speaker.

Now the benefit serves to help Saskatchewan families by offsetting registration costs for their children's participation, thereby improving access and reducing financial barriers to participation. Mr. Speaker, we've seen the results and the active family benefit is definitely making a difference. This program is particularly helpful for households with several children, in that if siblings participate in a couple of team sports, for example, football and hockey, or a sport . . . cultural activities such as a theatre school or music lessons, the tally can become daunting. Even for a single child in one activity with registration, materials, instruments, and possibly travel and accommodations, paying for all of that can indeed be a challenge for some families.

Now we firmly believe that this program can and has made the difference between quite a few Saskatchewan young people participating and not being able to join the team, so to speak. Whether it's parenting or voice classes, the local soccer team, the outdoor camping, cooking, or science classes, the active families benefit helps families ensure children and youth are connected to their communities while developing skills in the areas of art, in culture, and recreational activities.

Four years later, Mr. Speaker, the active families benefit has been enthusiastically embraced by families all over our great province. In 2001, data from the Canada Revenue Agency showed that approximately 40 per cent of families with children at home are currently participating in the program, the first year for which statistics are actually available.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to review how we developed the budget for the program. The budget for the program for each year is based on 75 per cent of the previous tax year estimate and 25 per cent of the current tax year as a result of the difference between fiscal year-end and tax year-end. Using the population of children aged 6 to 14 — 2007 Statistics Canada data is available to support that calculation — and factoring in a 40 per

cent uptake in the first year, the cost for the 2009 tax year was \$5.6 million. There's no inflation factored in to reach the \$9 million estimate for the program in the 2011-12 budget.

Mr. Speaker, it's anticipated that children in the expanded age categories might have a lower uptake to the program than has been seen in the 6- to 14-year age bracket. As well since the full \$9 million budget has not been fully utilized in year 1 or year 2, an additional \$3 million has been added to the budget to account for the expanded age range for active families benefit, bringing up the program budget to \$12 million for the current fiscal year. That's the way it's reflected in the current budget. That means that the funds for the program are already set aside and will be in place as part of this province's balanced budget — again, Mr. Speaker, most likely the only balanced budget coast to coast in this great nation.

As we know, at this point the benefit only covers children aged 6 to 14 years, registered in cultural, recreational, or sport programs. This change will expand the active families benefit eligibility to include all children all the way up to 18 years of age, allowing families to claim up to \$150 of eligible expenses for each child per taxation year. As I said, it's paid for and was mentioned in this spring's budget. The expanded age criteria increases the accessibility of the programs to more families and gives the active families benefit the second largest age range in all of Canada. That's second only to Manitoba, whose similarly focused fitness tax credit program includes young adults up to 24 years of age. We're up to 18; they're up to 24. Saskatchewan still has the edge, however, as our plan is a refundable benefit. Mr. Speaker, the active families benefit in Saskatchewan is unique in Canada. It is in fact the most generous as it provides a dollar-for-dollar, refundable benefit so all Saskatchewan families are able to receive back the first \$150 of eligible expenses.

Now ministry officials surveyed similar kinds of programs all across Canada and found that's not always the case. In most other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, the taxes saved range from 35 to \$75. This is a better program; there is no question about it. To date the active families benefit program has successfully provided tax rebates to nearly 57,000 Saskatchewan families — that is impressive indeed; colleagues agree — with the majority having a household income of \$80,000 or less. Fifty-seven thousand families, Mr. Speaker — that is truly outstanding.

Our government wants more dollars to stay in the pockets of Saskatchewan families for their use. That's why we tried to make the active families benefit as straightforward and as easy to access as possible. As before, families will simply need to retain receipts and complete an application form as part of their Saskatchewan income tax return and submit it to Canada Revenue Agency with their annual return. Mr. Speaker, this isn't an onerous task. Families won't be required to submit the receipts with their tax returns. They're just going to have to retain the receipts for future reference if and when they need to verify their claims.

The Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, the ministry that I have the honour to represent, has been consulting with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to look for ways to enhance opportunities for youth during the critical after-school period of 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. We truly believe it is

important for youth to participate in positive and healthy programs and activities, especially during this time period. The expanded active families benefit could very well boost uptake of after-school period youth initiatives such as Kids in Motion, an excellent program, Mr. Speaker.

The non-profits and municipalities run a variety of programs in this after-school time period and costs to participate in these programs can be claimed through the active families benefit. Our children use positive opportunities to participate in a wide range of cultural, recreational, and sport activities vital to healthy, active living.

As part of the 2011 provincial election platform, the Government of Saskatchewan promised to extend the active families benefit to include children under six and teenagers 15, 16, and 17 years old, right up to their 18th birthday. This came into effect retroactively January 1st of this year. The expanded active families benefit removes the eligibility criteria pertaining to the age of children from the Act and interestingly, Mr. Speaker, places it in the regulations. This will simplify the process if further amendments to age criteria are desired in the future. This legislation will come into force upon proclamation to allow passing of required regulations that will, as I mentioned, be retroactive to January 1, 2012, helping more and more Saskatchewan families beginning this very year. This makes Saskatchewan stronger and contributes to our overall quality of life, part of the Saskatchewan advantage.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to move second reading of *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport has moved second reading of Bill No. 38, *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

[14:30]

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again as we've indicated on a lot of the Bills that comes forward from the government, it's important that we, as an opposition, have the opportunity to look at the Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to offer our initial comments on Bill No. 38, *An Act to amend The Active Families Benefit Act*, Mr. Speaker.

And at the outset this Bill seems to be looking at ways and means in which they can promote and support the healthy families throughout Saskatchewan. And the amounts that they have presented, Mr. Speaker, are a far cry of what is needed right now in Saskatchewan, all throughout Saskatchewanland in terms of what is needed to really support a lot of families and young people that want to get very active with the sport and recreation and culture in their communities, Mr. Speaker.

I think one of the things that I want to raise is that when we looked at this Act overall, I don't think there's anybody in the province of Saskatchewan that's going to argue with the notion that we should have more active families. One of the things I think is really, really important as you look at some of the health trends, it is important to a government that you do all you can to support and promote healthy living, of course. And

part of the healthy living array of opportunities is also to have very active children and very active communities as a whole.

And we support that notion certainly, as an NDP opposition, because it's something that makes sense. It's something that's really important that we continue speaking about, and that we encourage all throughout our lives to have a healthy, happy, productive, and participatory family in every sense of the word, Mr. Speaker, not only in culture, not only in the arts, but in sport as well, and to involve all the family, Mr. Speaker.

So I think you'd look at some of the challenges specific to what this government has not addressed, Mr. Speaker, and I want to point out that it's something that has to be spoken about. Whether it's the North or whether it's rural or whether it's urban or whether it's Aboriginal, there are a lot more programs and opportunities that this government has given its record revenues to try and do things differently through the various areas that I spoke about, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important, I think it's vitally important that they hear some of the concerns that we have in northern Saskatchewan, of course, and some of the cities that we visit and certainly some of the rural areas that we have information from and of course the Aboriginal groups and organizations that are out there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan we know that there is a lot more work that needs to be done to encourage a lot of young people to get active in sport. I can tell you that I'm one of those folks over the years that was very, very blessed in terms of having the opportunity to play a number of sports, and it is through the school that we picked up a lot of the sport development opportunities.

And I want to commend the schools as well, Mr. Speaker, that in northern Saskatchewan that it is really something awesome to see how some of the schools are really developing a new northerner, if I could use that phrase. And this new northerner of course is not only proficient in math but they're also highly skilled in basketball or they're obviously very committed to their community in many cultural ways, Mr. Speaker. So we see first-hand how active communities can have a significant effect and impact on communities in northern Saskatchewan, and of course we want to see that continue.

The problem we have in the North, Mr. Speaker, is there's a lack of programs. There's a lack of facilities in general. There's a lack of people that are going to try and make a big difference in terms of coaches and facilitators. And we need that kind of focus and that kind of effort, Mr. Speaker, because there are so many gifted athletes in northern Saskatchewan and so many gifted people that are involved with culture and with programming that a lot of times they end up out there doing a lot of work on their own and with very little support.

And that's why I think it's important that the minister recognizes that it's not just as clean-cut as a tax break for active families, that there is greater questions and greater demands out there that need to be addressed and need the attention of the government that has record revenues. I would suggest that some of the money that they're planning on getting or spending, the millions of dollars they're spending on getting more politicians,

that perhaps they should use that money and put it into more programs to really promote and really defend the notion that we ought to have more active families and thus a healthier population. And, Mr. Speaker, we would be . . . That was the first suggestion that we would have on this particular Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see in some of these northern communities, as I mentioned, there is such a challenge for a lot of the local leadership, whether it's a First Nations band or whether it's a northern community, that I noticed the chiefs and councils and the mayors and councils always have a most difficult time in trying to find the skill set in a recreation director, to try and find program dollars in the community, to try and keep the facilities open, to try and encourage and engage the kids more and more and more, Mr. Speaker. These are some of the challenges that local councils face, and we often . . . I encourage them to continue that work. As daunting as it is, we're seeing a lot of the local leaders are trying their darndest to make things work when it comes to recreational opportunities and certainly being able to get involved with and develop active families as a concept for all these communities.

So many times, Mr. Speaker, at no fault of the recreation directors in these northern communities, they end up becoming fundraisers for facilities, primarily because there is no dollars for programs. And this is something that has to be addressed, Mr. Speaker, especially in northern Saskatchewan where those challenges are facing a lot of the communities on a daily basis. And this is where I think a small program, as the minister alluded to under the active families benefit program, is not going to be very good nor sufficient enough to deal with the northern issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think northern Saskatchewan is not asking in any way, shape, or form for a special deal or a handout. We're just saying that there is a lot of organizations within our communities, a lot of corporate players within our communities that can certainly do their part to help develop more active families. They could look at programs. They could look at facilities. They can look at affordability issues. They can look at coordination.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's the message we get from northern Saskatchewan people, is that we need to develop our young people in cultural opportunities, and certainly we need to look at them in sporting developments as a whole. We need to look at all these things that our children could become, Mr. Speaker, because I can tell you that it's always an amazing opportunity for me as a northern MLA to watch and see how many of the kids in northern Saskatchewan can indeed become those elite athletes that we see often on TV and we hear about on the radio. So if they had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, no question in my mind that many of our young children and the young families can certainly do a lot in northern Saskatchewan if they had access to adequate program support, access to adequate coaching, and of course the facilities in general.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's an amazing opportunity, as I mentioned, for young people. The parents are ready to do what they have to do. But it'd be nice if they could get recognized by this government in trying to solve some of those problems.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say in the North, certainly some of the

challenges that I've identified, we need to continue working on those issues and to make sure that the Saskatchewan Party is acutely aware that these are some of the challenges that northern Saskatchewan faces when it comes to recreational programming and of course cultural development of our Aboriginal youth and the non-Aboriginal youth as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important in rural Saskatchewan, it's always about facilities. It's an amazing challenge, I think, we face as a province. I think at one time it was something about 6 or \$7 billion in order to replace some of the aging facilities in a lot of our rural areas. There's no question that, as many of these communities struggle to keep their local rink open, it's always a challenge to see how they can possibly rebuild it, and secondly of course, how they can continue to operate given the small amount of money they have to do so. So we know that in rural Saskatchewan that facilities are always a challenge, Mr. Speaker. The economy's a bit better in some of the rural areas as opposed to the North, so there is that support that a lot of parents can afford to afford their children. And so a lot of times they do a lot of volunteerism on their own. So that helps quite a bit, Mr. Speaker.

And look at the urban issues as well, whether it's the affordability of everyone to access some of these facilities out there. We know that there is a huge gap in terms of the need for more facilities, and this is not being addressed by this particular Act. And you look at whether FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] or the Métis Nation, what kind of funding programs have they got available to develop the sport in each of their areas that they . . . or each of the people that they are supposed to be working for.

And that's some of the things that's important, Mr. Speaker, is that the North has specific needs and specific challenges. Rural Saskatchewan has specific needs and specific challenges. Urban Saskatchewan has the needs and their special challenges. And as well FSIN, the Métis Nation, and many of the programs out there to support other non-Aboriginal groups and people, they all have their special needs and they have their special challenges, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point out that it's important that we look at *The Active Families Benefit Act* and how the small change is about all the Saskatchewan Party want to do to recognize a lot of the hard work being done by many volunteers, many coaches, many parents, and many organizations out there. And we would suggest that perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it'll be adequate time if this particular government would recognize all that work and do something very effective and very dynamic to assist all these communities in their recreational aspirations. And, Mr. Speaker, if you give them the opportunity to do that by affording them proper resources, then I think a lot of communities will do a lot of good, great work that can have a lasting and a bigger impact in terms of promoting and developing healthy families and active families, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important that we, as the opposition, as I said at the outset, once we get the Bill we are going to look at the Bill, look through it and see where some of the deficiencies are. And we've identified a few in our opening comments. And we also want to make sure that we ask the different organizations that are out there to see exactly how effective this program is. And

we're assuming that if people are taking advantage of this — and of course the minister alluded to 57,000 families taking advantage of this — we need to find out if there's a better way that we can use, you know, some of the opportunities I expressed earlier by increasing, by increasing the support to the active families. And that's what's really, really important and some of the things that certainly the opposition would support.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that at the first blush, the Bill is basically straightforward. It has a lot of shortcomings in some of the financial demands that are out there as I spoke about, though very briefly. We need the time to take the Bill and take it apart and see what parts are important to emphasize and support, but which parts are lacking, Mr. Speaker. And we will suggest that perhaps if we had the millions of dollars that is being spent on more politicians as proposed by the Saskatchewan Party and put it towards recreational programs, that's probably a better and a longer term value for dollars than having more politicians in this Assembly.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to have discussions with the FSIN, we need to have discussions with the Métis Nation, and we have to have discussion some of the rural organizations that are involved out there. We need to talk to the urban folks and of course we need to talk to the northern folks as to how this active families benefit package is going to be of any value to them. If there is opportunity, then we encourage them to apply, but we obviously know at first blush this is not enough. It's a pittance of what is needed to really, really do the work to support the active families effort that is needed on a constant, continual basis, Mr. Speaker.

So on that front I am pleased to offer our initial comments. We have more comments forthcoming and we encourage people to take an active interest in any of the Acts that is being proposed by the Sask Party. It's important to watch carefully what they do. And if you have any particular concerns as a parent or as a volunteer or as an organization, then look through the Bill and then certainly present those findings and those concerns to your opposition caucus and we'll make sure that we present that information for you.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, the first opportunity to see the Bill. We will take our time to look through it and we will certainly make sure that we have the comments on this Bill that are necessary to ensure that this is exactly what is the intent as the Sask Party alludes to. We don't trust them, of course. And the second thing is we want to make sure that they have enough adequate dollars attached to this effort. And at first blush, and you can see on a continual basis, Mr. Speaker, it's a far cry of what is needed to really support and promote an active families plan, Mr. Speaker.

So on that note, I am pleased to today adjourn debate on this particular Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment on Bill No. 38, *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 41 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*. This Bill will amend *The Cities Act, The Municipalities Act, and The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010*. These Acts, Mr. Speaker, provide the legislative framework through which Saskatchewan's municipalities exercise their powers and provide services. These Acts and regulations have been in effect since January 1, 2003, January 1, 2006, and January 1, 2011, respectively.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill are required to address the issues of changes to incentives applied for early payment of education property tax and changes in the reporting of council decisions in regards to property tax exemptions.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, in terms of changing the application of incentives to education property tax, incentives are discounts and rebates that may be applied to education property tax. In 2008 and prior, each school division in the province established its own education property tax mill rate. This meant that ratepayers across the province paid different levels of education property tax, even if the assessed value of two homes in neighbouring school divisions was exactly the same.

The equity issue is an important issue when dissecting government funding for public education. Formerly, school boards that were progressive or were willing to take criticism for raising their mill rates to make improvements or had the advantage of having high assessments for property or natural resource assessment revenue had the ability to fund educational resources for their students to a much higher level than others. There is very much a have and a have-not situation as to the funds school divisions had at their disposal. Even if the government reduced its share of funding to school divisions with high assessments, the wealthier divisions simply taxed to accomplish their desired level of service to students. For an extended period of time in Saskatchewan, property owners funded at least 60 per cent of the cost of K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education.

In 2009, Mr. Speaker, this government's commitment was achieving a fair balance for education taxes, ensuring K to 12 education was properly funded, and ensuring the education portion of property tax would be reduced. This government implemented province-wide education property tax mill rates so ratepayers will be paying the same mill rates for education. Mr. Speaker, this was in fact the largest education property tax reduction in the province's history and the ratepayers are responsible for only 35 per cent of educational funding.

Since 2009 this government has, over the past four years, provided \$165.7 million in education property tax relief. Government now pays a much greater share of the cost of K to 12 education — 65 per cent from provincial funding sources and 35 per cent from property taxes. Since 2009 the amount of

education property tax paid by Saskatchewan people has been significantly reduced.

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, an incentive such as a discount or rebate provides a reduction on taxes. Municipal legislation continued to allow municipalities authority to apply incentives to education property taxes, even though this government had drastically reduced the portion paid for education property tax by introducing the province-wide mill rates for education property tax.

The current discount rate for prompt payment or prepayment of education property tax can be as high as 15 per cent. Discounts or rebates may also be applied to payment of arrears and penalties on arrears. Without these proposed amendments, municipalities can choose to offer a discount or rebate on education property tax. Municipalities that do not offer a discount have ratepayers paying 100 per cent of their portion for education property tax. Municipalities offering a discount are reducing the amount of education property tax their ratepayers must pay, thus creating inequality.

In 2010 school divisions lost approximately \$20.9 million and \$16.4 million in 2011 due to discounts, rebates applied to education property tax. If all municipalities were to offer the maximum discount, the shortfall could amount to approximately \$93 million, Mr. Speaker.

School divisions set their budget to deliver educational programs. If the school divisions lost revenue through discounts and rebates, the government must transfer money from the General Revenue Fund to school divisions to backfill these lost revenues. This reduces funding available for programs or capital assets in other areas or ministries in order to provide revenue required by school divisions to deliver the programs.

Mr. Speaker, changing the ability for municipal councils to apply discounts to education property tax ensures property owners province-wide will be paying 100 per cent of their portion of property tax for education. It will also mean revenue should not need to be transferred from the General Revenue Fund to the school divisions to back the revenue lost due to discounts and rebates.

Furthermore, changes to tax incentive discounts on education property tax must be consistent with the government's desire to achieve a fair balance for education funding, ensuring K to 12 education is properly funded and equity across the province is achieved.

The second area of amendments, Mr. Speaker, relates to the transparency and accountability of council decisions pertaining to local tax exemptions and abatements. Currently municipalities have legislative authority to exempt, cancel, abate both municipal and education property taxes. Exemptions and abatements remove what otherwise would be an obligation to pay education tax on property. Exempt property does not appear on the tax roll and no taxes are levied on the property.

An abatement compromise applies to non-exempt property in respect of which taxes are levied, and the obligation to pay the taxes levied is removed. Taxes may be exempted for a period of up to five years. There are statutory limitations councils must

abide to to grant these exemptions. At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, there is no method of tracking or monitoring local tax exemptions granted by municipal councils. Councils have not been required to publicly report the exemptions. The local exemptions granted by councils are simply recorded in the minutes of council.

My ministry, in joint co-operation with the Ministry of Education, has carried out an extensive review of the impact exemptions, abatements, discounts, and penalties have on education property tax. Throughout the review, throughout the review process, consultation meetings were held with both internal and external stakeholders. Various surveys were undertaken and results tabulated. Based on the input from stakeholders, it appeared there were inconsistencies in the application of discretionary, non-statutory exemptions. Any inconsistency of local exemptions leads to inequalities of taxation across the province. All legislated exemptions will remain status quo. The amendments will simply ensure property grant of local tax exemptions is shown on the assessment roll of the municipality. This will help to ensure the exemptions are transparent and that the public, school divisions, and province are aware that they are being given.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs will continue working with the municipal sector to provide transparency and accountability in all aspects of municipal work. In addition, we will continue to work with the Ministry of Education to refine the necessary reporting forms. Our government will work hard to keep the Saskatchewan advantage and keep Saskatchewan moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce to the Assembly the receipt of Royal Recommendation for the following Bill. This was not received in time to appear on the order paper; therefore, I beg to inform the Assembly that Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the subject matter of Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*, recommends it to the consideration of the Assembly.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I would like to inform the Assembly that we have now received Royal Recommendation. The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased once again to stand on behalf of the official opposition to certainly give our initial comments on Bill 41, which really talks a lot about the opportunity to really begin to penalize a lot of communities throughout the province of Saskatchewan when they offer incentives such as early payment supports when people that are paying their property taxes do so and on a timely basis, Mr. Speaker.

And as I listened to the minister, we tried very hard to track what exactly he was making reference to. But to cut to the

chase very quickly and very simply, what the minister wants to do is he wants to take away the powers and rights and, I think, authority of a lot of the governments or the local governments throughout our lands to be able to offer incentives for people that want to pay their property tax early, Mr. Speaker.

There's a lot of people in the cities that go on a regular basis and they pay their property taxes on a timely basis, while others paid in advance, Mr. Speaker. And what the cities want to do, as well as all the northern villages and of course the towns and hamlets and so on and so forth, is they want to encourage people to continually pay their property taxes because it makes such a big, huge difference in their budget. And that's one of the reasons why I think, Mr. Speaker, that some of the cities and some of the towns and villages opted to have this incentive put in place where, if you as a property tax owner paid your property taxes ahead of schedule and done so on a regular basis, that they'd give you a certain percentage off.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's all kinds of different ways that the incentive works, and I don't want to get into the detail of that because obviously we will be going through some of that information as this Bill moves through the Chamber. What I think is important, Mr. Speaker, is for people out there, the taxpayers, the land, the property tax payers that are out there, you should know what the Bill is all about. It's pure and simple that the Saskatchewan Party don't want to allow you the opportunity to realize some savings on property taxes by paying your property tax bill on an earlier basis.

Because a lot of times, your local mayor, your reeve, or local school division — not so much the school divisions would be involved — but the local council can give you an incentive for paying your property taxes ahead of time or on a timely basis. And sometimes the percentage, Mr. Speaker, is 2 or 3 per cent. And that makes a significant amount of savings to senior citizens or to young families or to struggling families. And, Mr. Speaker, again what we're seeing here is that the old notion, the old notion, as the minister said, the government give it with one hand and they take it with the other. And that's certainly what's happening here in this particular Bill.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lot of folks that are paying attention to this particular Bill because there's been so many different or there's been a lot of media coverage on this particular Bill. And in fact I think there was such an uproar in terms of how this Bill is going to be moving forward that there was even an opinion page on *The StarPhoenix* about how this particular minister flubbed this whole process and that he never asked for consultation with the cities. And he steadfastly rejected any notion that he's going to change his mind on this particular Bill. And I think a lot of the cities and a lot of the communities, the villages, and the towns were not happy with the way in which this particular minister and this government has dealt with this particular early payment incentive program that they had as it relates to property taxes.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know in northern Saskatchewan and in rural Saskatchewan and small town Saskatchewan and the larger centres, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of people that have property taxes, by law they're compelled to pay them and they continue paying them. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that they often took advantage of as citizens that are doing their part or

meeting their legal obligations is they not only pay it on time but they pay it in advance. And that's something that they've done for years and years and years.

And now that the government is now saying, well hold it here. We're not going to let you guys do that any more. We're taking away that opportunity. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a complete shame because people were not consulted and people were not advised of this change. And now, Mr. Speaker, that all the different Acts that are being involved — *The Cities Act*, the municipal Act, and the northern Act as well — these are clearly an agenda by the Sask Party to make sure that nobody gets any breaks for being, for acting earlier when it comes to paying your taxes. And I think that's not what you want to do as a government, Mr. Speaker; that you want to have the opportunity to be able to pay your property taxes ahead of time. It makes people feel good. I think they're happy with that. And if they get 2 or 3 percentage points off their property tax bill, that's certainly money that they could save overall.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we don't know who the minister confided with or discussed this whole process with, this whole Act with. I can tell you that there's probably a lot of cities and a lot of towns that are not happy with this. I think it's meddling into their business which I don't think is fair of a government to do. And for what the reasons are, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have our theories. But we're going to really try and be fair in this process, as the case is on many of these Bills to make sure we reach out to different organizations and different people that can give us some very sound advice on how the municipal property tax issue is going to impact their local community. And we also want to make sure we ask the taxpayers themselves how they feel about this particular Bill and what the minister proposes.

Now we know that *The StarPhoenix* ran an editorial and I'm sure we'll have the opportunity to share that editorial and take some very good clips from their position. And I don't think that the editorial in *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Speaker, was complimentary at all to this particular minister but more so to the Saskatchewan Party government for what I think is obviously the case of them meddling into a program that really had a lot of incentive attached to it, Mr. Speaker. And this is all about how they want to control the agenda and do what they want, when they want, and how they wish. And, Mr. Speaker, that kind of arrogance does not bode well for the future of our province. It doesn't really complement a healthy mound of admiration that we should have as a senior level of government towards our cities, towns, and villages.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see that this is going to be an issue that's going to impact every town, city, and village. We want to make sure we pay close attention to it. We want to share it with the different organizations that would have some effect or impact on this, and I think that's something that we want to take our time and, you know, to do.

So again, Mr. Speaker, at first blush this is something that the government shouldn't be proceeding with. It is not something that we would want to see taken away from many of the ratepayers or taxpayers that do the proper thing and pay their property tax earlier or right on time. It allows them to get the incentive that I mentioned earlier. Now this Bill takes away that

incentive and, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is, who did the minister consult with? He didn't consult with anybody. He put this Bill in place for reasons that we can certainly assume, and we'll share those beliefs at a later date.

[15:00]

But what's important is that, why would he meddle in this particular, in the affairs of a local government? Why would he meddle in the opportunity for people to pay their property tax ahead of time, thereby getting a small incentive, Mr. Speaker? It helps the communities. It helps the homeowner, the property tax owner, feel good about some of the things that they're doing when they pay early, and they realize their obligation and they're doing their part to make sure that the money's received earlier. And that has a lot of benefit to cities. It has a lot of benefit to towns and to villages as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's much the same thing that if you make an early payment on your Mastercard or an early payment on your Visa, it really reduces the amount of interest and really helps your credit score. It helps a number of things by making earlier payments than planned. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the same principle that applies to the property tax that the minister was talking about in this particular Bill.

So a lot of questions, a lot of concerns from the opposition. We're hearing a bit from the media in terms of how this Bill was not properly discussed with the appropriate players, and we're going to ask organizations out there that may want to participate in looking at this Bill and ask the questions, why is this minister doing it at this time? And why is this government doing this particular, what I would say is an invasion of opportunity that the communities have and the property tax owners have under this early incentive program?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think there's been a lot of people that have been paying attention. The minister obviously didn't want this Bill to be highlighted. The minister obviously didn't want the attention that he's got on this particular Bill. Because we know he's been getting a lot of concerns from different organizations and different people. And that's kind of how the Sask Party operates. Whether it's the whole notion of the education property tax, when they took away the right for school boards to set some of the local tax rates, Mr. Speaker. Not only did they take away their rights to have the school boards assess their own property taxes, Mr. Speaker; they then turned around and said, well we will negotiate a teachers' salary package for you and the teachers have to live with it. For the school boards, you have to do so as well.

So it becomes kind of a conflicting, confusing statement that they're making when they get themselves involved with the property tax issue, Mr. Speaker. And once again we've seen complete failure on this government's part to properly consult with people and do the right thing and do something that's put in place to help the people. And this is one of the areas I think they've made another major blunder, Mr. Speaker. It's blunder to blunder with this particular government when it comes to property taxes. And when people pay early, show that great incentive to help their local community, feel good about themselves, Mr. Speaker, this government has now taken away that opportunity with this Bill and has said, no more incentives

for early payment, no more breaks for people that pay on time; none of that stuff is going to be of any value any more in the future. We're taking away that right to do that.

And that's what this Bill says, and a lot of people don't like it. A lot of communities don't like it, Mr. Speaker. And as time goes on we'll share some of the letters and certainly some of the articles printed by the media in terms of how this minister did not do his obligation to consult with different organizations and people.

So on that front, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that I take the time to tell people out there, obviously their participation is valued. We would encourage them to share their opinions on this Bill. We look forward to getting some of that information. We ourselves as an opposition caucus — whose job we take a great pride in, the job of holding this government to account — it's something that we'll be undertaking as well.

So it's important to tell people out there that you can indeed be part of the process on this particular Bill or any other Bill that the Saskatchewan Party government wants to sneak through, that we make sure that we tell people, tell people exactly what is happening and what the impact is and how they have not consulted with anybody on any front, Mr. Speaker. So whether it's Bill 36, *The Constituency Boundaries Act*, or whether it's this Bill to take away the incentives to pay their tax, property tax earlier, or whether it's Bill 5 or 6 to go to war with labour, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a continuing trend by the Sask Party government to try and slip things under the radar. And, Mr. Speaker, our job is to make sure we tell people out there there is a way and means you can fight back. And certainly assisting the opposition in that regard is something that we would have an open invitation to all people and organizations out there to take advantage of.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say again that this is a Bill that has some ramifications to our local governments. We need to assess that. You know as a former mayor, I used to always watch how my budget was impacted by some of the government decisions of the day, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you there was some great thought processes when it came to northern Saskatchewan, that there was a lot of consultation, Mr. Speaker, when it came from the previous NDP government coming to the local government partners. And there was not that healthy amount of disrespect then, Mr. Speaker, as we see now.

So I think the municipal leaders don't like this at all. There are a lot of questions that they would have. And we're going to take the time to go through the budget, see what the effects are, see what the impacts are, and to ask the minister and press the minister exactly who he consulted with and where is this coming from because it's a good program that a lot of people took advantage of, Mr. Speaker.

So in closing, on our initial look at this particular Bill, we're going to pay close attention to it, take the time to understand it, invite participation by different organizations and people that are out there, and certainly expose it for its weaknesses and its lack of consultation. So on that front, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 41.

The Speaker: — Okay, the member has moved adjournment

on Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 37

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hutchinson that **Bill No. 37** — *The Tourism Saskatchewan Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into the debate on Bill No. 37, *An Act respecting Tourism Saskatchewan*. And of course this is an Act that is causing quite a stir in this sector because of the nature of how this has all played out in the last month or so. A month ago we had no idea we would be taking a look at something like this and how a month can change the face of an important sector like tourism in Saskatchewan. Many people, in fact the people involved quite in depth with tourism here in Saskatchewan, had no idea that this was going to happen. No idea.

And before us now in second reading is, we have a Bill that will create a Crown corporation. It's interesting that it would be a government, a right wing government, that would be yet creating more government. It seems that they have fallen in love with the idea of more government. They are talking about three more politicians because they think, how can we go wrong with three more politicians? And here we have one more Crown corporation. And we have to really ask, is this the right thing to be doing? Is this the right thing to be doing?

We saw, right after the last election, this Premier introduced what he thought was a wonderful idea that would save the day in Saskatchewan, about Enterprise Saskatchewan and the enterprise regions. And here we are a few years later picking up the pieces of that failed experiment, that failed experiment called enterprise, the enterprise regions, at a cost of \$4 million. Four million dollars that could be used for something else quite more beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan, like that Highway No. 22, the goat trail, the goat trail. We should do something. It's not the goat trail. I know in Toronto they have the Go lines. We have the goat trail here in Saskatchewan.

But anyways, I digress here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know I'm supposed to be talking about tourism. But it seems to be a recurring pattern, recurring pattern about the kind of choices that government makes. And from that you set your priorities, and then you put your plan into place. And so this government has not made wise choices, and whether it's the enterprise regions that now we're picking up the pieces of \$4 million, \$4 million.

It's hurting people in communities right across our province,

these people who are dedicated to the tourism industry here in Saskatchewan. And they do such an incredible job, incredible job of selling our province to people inside the province to get out of their neighbourhoods and maybe go visit some relatives, whether they live in a small town, a small village, out in the farm or in a big city.

And I got to tell you, as somebody whose riding is deeply, deeply involved in tourism, I've got to tell you that tourism plays a big role in Saskatoon Centre. And of course we have probably one of the most iconic features, I would bet, of this province. I mean it must be in the top five. We have the Bessborough hotel and we have the South Saskatchewan River. We've got Meewasin. We've got so much in my riding about tourism, so I have to say that this is a big deal for many people in my riding, in my riding. You talk about the festivals. The Saskatchewan SaskTel Jazz Festival is huge, huge. So tourism plays a big part in many of the folks who live in my riding. So I do have a concern about this. I do have a concern.

And I do want to go through . . . So we've asked about this on numerous times and yet this minister, I won't go through his remarks because I don't think they're particularly helpful because I cannot make out hide nor hair from his answers. Who did he . . . Where did they get this idea from? We have some real questions about the real motives behind this, but you know, our critic right after the budget raised this in the House in questions. And I just want to quote some of the people that he's been quoting and some of the ideas our critic's been raising because I do think it's important to get this on the record.

And of course the biggest one was just the day after the budget was released. The industry was taken completely off guard, didn't know what had happened because nobody had really told them until just prior to the budget. But the CEO [chief executive officer] and president of Tourism Saskatchewan Dr. Lynda Haverstock was quoted in the papers as saying, and I quote, "We felt quite blindsided." "We felt quite blindsided." They had not significant or sufficient advance notice. There was just something probably the morning of where this was going to be the new direction. And of course this caught that group completely off guard. They did not know what was happening and where was this coming and why did this happen.

Now we have the minister will often quote from this report that he refers to but . . . And I will talk more about it. But I think that as we've tried to say many times, if it isn't broke, what are you trying to fix? And clearly you have a government who I have to think about what are the ulterior motives? What's the real agenda here? What's the real agenda? We understand that the budget is about \$12 million for Tourism Saskatchewan, and the government pays a pretty big chunk of that. We grant that and that's fair enough. But they do with many other organizations.

But the best part of this organization was the fact that it was sector-driven. It was membership-driven. The folks who knew the field had the boots on the ground, were actually involved in the leadership. They were making things happen. And I've got to tell you like so many, so many areas where you have, particularly private sector, particularly when you have the entrepreneurial spirit involved, people go above and beyond to make things happen. They live, they breathe, they just totally

believe in their business. And we see that in tourism, whether it's a small bed and breakfast or whether it's a Bessborough hotel. People feel that special connection to tourism because they're saying, hey, look at us. We're worth looking at. Stop in. Have a visit. See what we're all about.

And this signal that this government is saying, whoa, we want to change the channel here. We don't think that we want to have you involved any more because we know best. Now that really sounds like big government to me. That sounds like a government that's lost its moral compass, that really doesn't know why it found its way into power in the first place. Because now it's all about the power. Now it's all about the media. And so I wonder, is this about controlling . . . You know, so much of what Sask Tourism does is media, is advertising. Is that what they want, to have more control over that?

[15:15]

Do you know, when I was looking through the Bill, and I mean it seems relatively interesting, straightforward because it's just another Crown corporation. But there are some parts I found very interesting that I think I don't know why they did this. And I would have questions in committee about this. When we talk about the board, it does not talk about any representation from the sector. Isn't it interesting? It says not more than 11 directors be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, but does not say, you know, where these people should come from. They can be 11 ministers. They can be 11 MLAs. I know we're going to have more MLAs. It sounds like we're going to have them. So they're going to have to have some work, something to do. So maybe we're going to get these three new politicians are going to be worked into this area.

But it does not talk about the expertise that the sector has and values that, that expertise of the people who are driving the tourism industry in Saskatchewan. You would think that they would say, maybe not more than three, not more than five would be from the sector. Not the case. Who knows where these 11 people may come from? We don't even know if they're going to come from the province here, you know? Quite often we have situations where you say a director must live, their home address must be in the province. But not in this case. Not in this case. You just have not more than 11 directors.

I will be very interested to find out, when this goes through, who those 11 directors are. That will be of interest. And I really hope — it would only make common sense, but this is something that we're seeing that's short on the other side, a little common sense in who they would appoint — I would hope that the majority, the majority would be people who are from the tourism sector. But that's not a given. In fact they may be, as I said, politicians. They could be civil servants. Who knows? I just am going to look forward to seeing who's going to be in this, who's going to be on the board.

So I have some real, real concerns about that because again I think if we were to ask the minister, we probably wouldn't get an answer because that's what he's very good. And I want to talk a little bit about some of the questions that we had asked. I know my colleague, the critic for tourism had asked about . . . He pointed out one. It was April 5th. He was talking to the

minister about questions around this very Crown, and he was asking that in fact it was interesting because, as I said earlier, Tourism Saskatchewan did not know, completely off-guard with the plans to add politics to Tourism Saskatchewan. And they ignored their own report that recommended Tourism Saskatchewan be kept as an arm's-length organization.

And following the budget, the Saskatchewan Bed and Breakfast Association apparently, apparently wrote to the minister and said, "Now it seems we and all the industry partners of Tourism Saskatchewan are being evicted so your government can take full control." I want to read that quote again. The quote is, ". . . it seems that we and all the industry partners of Tourism Saskatchewan are being evicted so your government can take full control."

So is this a political move? Is there a bigger agenda here? I wonder because when you don't have a more prescriptive piece around who the board members are, you have to wonder, why are you getting rid of the industry members? And what are you trying to create here? And so I have real questions about that. And then the question is, we've seen other letters where they've quoted, despite what the minister has stated, there's been little or no consultation with the actual industry. And so I think there's some real, real concerns about what the real motivation, what the real motivation is here.

You know, and of course there was that poll, and of course I know this government loves polls. When things are going well they often trot out the poll and say, look at the results. We're on the right track.

They don't do a lot of consultations. They don't do a lot of consultations, but they seem attracted to polls. And of course we know of one that was reported in the paper that over 600 people responded, members responded. Almost 70 per cent disagree with this government's decision to turn Tourism Saskatchewan into a Crown corporation. So why do they do that? I mean hardly anybody thought it was a good idea. Things were working well. So here you have a poll that would give you a snapshot to say listen, and they knew the results of this poll before this legislation came forward, so I do have some real, real concerns.

And of course we, you know, I do have to say that our critic has raised some very, very good points about this. And of course one was this report from Mr. DeRyk who pointed to the CEO and Lynda Haverstock's history as the Liberal leader and thought and said, the government's decision is politically vindictive and poorly thought out. The minister had responded by saying, no other province has a stand-alone tourism agency.

So here you have some bigger questions here. Are there political motives here? What is this the vehicle for? And so we have to ask some questions about this. We have some concerns. And as I said, if it's not broke, then why fix it? What's the real motive here? Are they trying to get more control over the media, the public relations dollars? Do they have people they want to see on the board, they want to control it more tightly? Is this some sort of brainwave similar to the enterprise region that we see after only a few short years this government's going to have to rescue and pull back and disband it and go give it back to the tourism sector at a cost of millions of dollars? We know

the enterprise regions is costing \$4 million or is going to cost millions of dollars to disentangle itself. And so I think that we have some real, real questions here, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that when we look at Tourism Saskatchewan, and we think what a good job they are doing. And we have some concerns because the minister tends to want to hide behind certain parts of the report. But we know that the report clearly states, and it's on page 35, "One of the key areas of agreement among all parties to this review is that Tourism Saskatchewan should remain an arm's length organization from . . . [Saskatchewan]." So if he's talking about that report, and he seems to be picking and choosing, cutting and pasting parts of it, but clearly there seems to be one thing they all agreed on, that the single point of entry should be through the industry organization that exists now.

Now I know I haven't read the entire report. I haven't looked at the report because I'm not the critic. But I can tell you, when I hear that kind of recommendation, I would have to say, I would have to say that makes some, some sense. I mean it's pretty clear English, isn't it? It's pretty clear English that they've all seemed to agree. They all agree, "One of the key areas of agreement among all parties [and I would assume that when they say all parties that there were government people at this] to this review is that Tourism Saskatchewan should remain an arm's length organization from government."

So I think, in plain English, it's pretty well straightforward. I did not read in there that, oh, and by the way, what an arm's-length organization means is that it should be a Crown corporation, a Treasury Board Crown where the government gets to pick who the 11 board members are. They get to pick who the 11 board members are. There's no, no list of who these 11 people should be, should they even live in the province. So I don't know how that works. I don't know how that fits together, but I do know that it is indicative of this government in the sense of priorities that it's had demonstrated in its budget and the Bills it's brought forward.

They've not seen the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan where they've raised the cost of drugs on the prescription plan for seniors and for children. They've decided that that can be okay, with \$5, going up. Other issues in terms of child care, investing in our schools, investing in our highways, that type of thing, they would rather see more politicians, more government, and a Crown corporation.

I'd like to know. I'd like to see how this plays out over the next number of years. Is the cost of this organization going to be frozen at \$12 million, or will it go up? And then will it have to be disbanded at extra cost at the end of the day because we'll have to redo this all over again because we realize we had a good thing going in Saskatchewan, and why did we mess with it? It was because of some political interference, some political motivations that are unclear right now. But I have to say, there's some pretty big questions out in the community when you have people writing or making comments about the CEO and her political past. I don't know if that's accurate, but it's a big shadow out there. It's a big shadow.

And there's a question mark about the 11 board members who can come from anywhere. They don't have to have any tourism

experience. I find that odd that there's no prerequisite of that. And why, why would this government directly ignore one of the key, one of the key if not the key recommendations that Sask Tourism or Tourism Saskatchewan should remain as the arm's-length organization, the single-point entry for people when they want to make contact to find out about our province?

And I think it's so, I think it's so important because if it is politically motivated, we have some real questions about that because tourism is for everybody, absolutely for everybody because we all love this province, and we all want to showcase this province. We all want to make people feel welcome when they come here. And we don't want to get into a political thing about who loves this place more. We all do. We all do. There's certain things that rise above small "p" politics, and we know tourism should be one of them. And we all should be, in our communities we should all be together celebrating the wonderful things, the wonderful places, the built environment, the natural environment. We are truly a blessed province.

And you know, I've been around this province, and I've got to tell you one of the best years we ever had was 2005, celebrating the centennial of Saskatchewan. People came together, came together and made this place a wonderful place for people to come home to, strangers and family to come and see our province. And whether it was the North and the forest and the lakes or the South and the prairies, and I think about Cypress Hills, you know, you can go through lists and lists of beautiful places that makes this province pretty special.

But I really do worry that if this becomes a political football with no apparent reason, I have some, I have some deep, deep concerns. And I know this minister has not articulated that well. He's turned it into a political issue, and that really causes me great concern of where we're going to go into the future with tourism in this province. Is it one that we can all rally behind?

Because you know, we all have people, we all have family or friends who are working in this industry, and they make this place a beautiful place, and you know, not only in terms of the location but in terms of the seasons. We have beautiful summers, but we also have beautiful winters most of the time. Sometimes we can get the odd blizzard that throws a curveball in there. But even that, some people like that. It just reminds them of their youth, school days, weather days.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that, you know, we all love our holidays, and when we think about whether we spend them further away in other provinces, other countries, but it's always good to take a holiday here in Saskatchewan. And Tourism Saskatchewan has really stepped up, stepped up to the plate to make Saskatchewan a special, special place. And there's hidden secrets right around this province. We all think we know this place very well, but it's always interesting to know when you find a really neat bed and breakfast or a special lake, a special campground, you know, or a special hiking trail or a special place to go watching birds. It's all . . .

An Hon. Member: — Golf course.

[15:30]

Mr. Forbes: — Golf course. Yes, I guess you could do golf

course, cross-country skiing, you name it, you know, snowmobiling, whatever your interest is. I think this is a great place to be.

But when we have this kind of interference, I have a lot of concerns. And it will be interesting to see how the public responds to this because if it's about controlling the media, if it's about getting a hold of the advertising dollars and trying to promote a political message, then I think people will back off and say, listen, this isn't quite the place that we thought it would be. And I think that we have some real concerns about this, some real concerns.

So I think that we will have more questions about this, and I know more of my colleagues will want to speak about this. And we'll definitely have questions. I don't know if we'll get answers in committee. We have not yet seen that demonstrated by this particular minister, but we will have questions for sure in committee. But I know many people want to get up before me, before we get to that stage.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do want to just summarize the key points of, we don't know where this came from. We didn't see the consultation. There was no advance consultation. It seems to be budget driven, laden on with some other motives that we don't know why. We don't know why. And I guess the proof will be in the pudding. But we do think government can be a helpful tool in sectors that need that extra help or there needs to be a social issue addressed. But here was something that was working quite well. And if it's not broke, then why, why fix it, and particularly in this area of tourism where the folks on the ground, boots on the ground, really know their industry? And why we're involved and wanting to make it our industry, a government industry, I have some real concerns about that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment at this point of Bill No. 37, an Act to respect Tourism Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 37, *The Tourism Saskatchewan Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 39

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 39 — *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to the second reading of Bill No. 39, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act*. First off, Mr. Speaker, I'll start by addressing the comments made here in the House yesterday by the minister when he introduced the Bill, just to give what I

see as my general understanding of what the intention of this Bill is.

It looks like this is the creation of a Crown corporation, just like the last Bill that we spoke to where the government is introducing a new Crown corporation for tourism. This is a new Crown corporation to be called the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan or the FCAA. Once again, this is a new Crown that is replacing an existing body, and the existing body is called the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission or the SFSC. So it's converting, it appears to be converting a commission to a Crown, much like the previous speaker spoke about the conversion of the Sask Tourism Authority to a new Crown corporation that will manage the tourism affairs of the province.

The minister went on to describe how this transition will happen. Because I wasn't familiar with the SFSC or the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, until this Bill was introduced, and having done a little bit of reading on the purpose of that commission, I'm really glad it's there because it is protecting consumers and protecting people who use financial services here in Saskatchewan. So apparently there are employees that are hired by the SFSC. It has a board of directors. It has the full weight and authority of hearings. And I will be speaking to its legislation a little bit in a bit, but this Bill is just creating a transition from the commission to this new Crown corporation called the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan.

So it appears the government is using the Treasury Board Crown authority to create yet another body that will be controlled by the Executive Council. In this case, the transition from the old Bill or the old Act to the new Bill is going to deal with the transfer of employees, payment of revenues that are paid to the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Fund.

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is something I think we're going to have more questions about as we go through this debate. What exactly is that fund? And what does it represent, and what are the purposes of it? And we'll look at the existing legislation a little bit to see that, and the payment of expenses of the SFSC by the authority, so that's all part of the transition. And finally the transition would confirm that the pension rights and other rights of the transferred employees won't be diminished, which is entirely appropriate and necessary, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It would give the authority some corporate powers that it will need to manage its business in the best interests of Saskatchewan consumers of financial services and consumer goods and services. And then the minister indicated that the last transition measure in this Bill would continue the appointments of the current commission members and executive director into the new authority.

Now it's strange, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the creation of this new Crown, the government has undertaken to keep the same members of the commission and the executive director, whereas in the creation of the new Crown for tourism, we have no indication from the government what its intentions are with respect to the current executive director. And that's concerning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think this raises a big question.

Why would we not deal with the executive director of tourism in the same way that we're dealing with the executive director of the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission? Why is there a disconnect there? And why is it that the government has chosen in this case to keep the executive director, but in the case of Saskatchewan Tourism, they have left it as a mystery? And then indeed in estimates the other night, the minister declined to say if there is even any plan to deal with the executive director of Saskatchewan Tourism, which I think is unfortunate partly because she has indicated she was completely blindsided by this transition. I wonder if the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission was consulted before the government announced they were going to turn it into a Crown corporation.

So that's of concern. And I think there's some questions there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the choices and the way this government conducts business, if they're going to continue appointments of some commission members and some executive directors but then on the other hand, when they're creating another Crown, they give no indication whatsoever to the people working there what their future is going to be. So it's disturbing, and you wonder why this particular commission is being given special treatment or at least honourable and fair treatment. And so those are questions that we're going to have as we go along here.

The indication from the speaker is that this Crown corporation will draw on the business expertise of a board of directors to assess the needs in the marketplace without compromising the government's need to manage the province's financial affairs. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not really sure what that's trying to say. And in this case it appears, if it's the same people that are doing the work now as a commission, there's already the business expertise there that's needed, although it appears they're adding maybe another layer of a board of directors. Although would you have commission members and board of directors? So there's a lot of questions we'll have about how this new Crown will be established.

It says that the powers and the responsibilities of the SFSC will be retained, but that there will be a couple of new Acts added to it, and these appear to reasonable Acts to be added to the list that they currently administer and that would be *The Real Estate Act* and *The Payday Loans Act*. In fact the minister went on to say that they are already being administered by the commission, so this is just sort of regulating and ensuring that those two Acts are properly listed in the list of Bills that the commission is responsible for and ultimately the new Crown will be responsible for.

So that's basically . . . He talks a little bit about having a Treasury Board Crown corporation drawing on business expertise of a board of directors. We have questions about that. I'm not sure why that's necessary and why the current commission isn't operating sufficiently as it is. It may be a good idea; it might be a bad idea, but we're certainly going to have to ask some questions about that.

There's a number of correcting type of clauses in this legislation as well and amends a number of Acts. And it will also deal with other transitional requirements to ensure that the Government of Saskatchewan's rights and liabilities are

properly transferred and continued under the new Crown corporation.

They're looking to have this in place by October 1st. That's the deadline that the minister has indicated he would like to achieve this new Crown and secure the corporate governance and funding structure that they need. So this is obviously a Bill that requires budgetary drawdown. Again we're not sure from this Bill how much it's going to cost. We don't have any indication from the minister what the costs are, but we do know that this is a budgetary Bill so there will be additional expenses for the taxpayer coming out of this. Already the commission seems to be well established. It files its annual reports. I assume it's funded by the government already. So the additional costs, we'll be looking very closely at those, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that this Bill and this new Crown aren't costing the taxpayers extra dollars unnecessarily when there was a commission in place that already was accomplishing the needs and the objectives of the government.

So that was basically the minister's comments. They were quite short and I think disappointingly short in some ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is a fairly technical aspect of government and I think it would be helpful for the people to have the minister give more in-depth comments on this. Perhaps he will share some other comments at another time, but it seems to be a bit sparse on the face of it.

Just one comment about the naming of the Bill to start off with. It seems strange that it's not financial services. And again it's just a question that I have because it's an Act, Bill 39 is . . . The title of Bill 39 is *An Act respecting the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. So really this is financial services that this Crown corporation will be working with, so I'm not sure why that word was dropped when it was very clearly part of the previous commission and it is definitely part of the Act. So there's an extended definition of financial services so I just . . . I don't know if it was dropped for a reason or maybe they just thought it was too long already. But I think financial services means more to me than just financial, so I'm wondering why that is and just making a comment on that.

So before we get into the new Bill, I think it's helpful for me and the people that are following this to look at the existing legislation. Right now we have, as I said, the SFSC which is the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission, and it is governed by an Act called *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act*. And this Act established the commission a number of years ago, and what it did, it integrated into one organization the financial services regulators in Saskatchewan. So there's a number of them. There's the Saskatchewan securities division, the financial institutions division, the pensions division, and the payday and loans division, as well as the consumer protection division.

So you can see the first five are really related to financial services, things that we deal with in our banking all the time. Securities, we know that the securities division looks after shareholders and ensures that shareholders are properly protected in the case of share trading, and it's a very highly technical area of the financial world. And so it reassures me as a shareholder that when I am purchasing shares in a publicly

registered company, that I know it's being regulated and monitored. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think we can underestimate the importance of proper regulation, monitoring, and compliance of all forms of legislation — not just financial legislation, but environmental legislation.

And to see deregulation occur in any area should be of concern to the public. Because quite often that's where things like listeriosis will break out, is when regulations aren't followed or that civil servants aren't given the proper tools to properly implement, monitor, and ensure compliance of regulations. We live in a regulatory world. Every area, every area of industry is controlled by regulations — restaurants, retail stores, any food services, anything related to health, and obviously financial services as well. So knowing that the Financial Services Commission is there looking after our interests in the securities area is one that I think the public should take comfort from, as long as those public servants are given the tools they need to do the job properly.

The same goes for the financial institutions division. Again, you know, most banks are regulated federally and we do have the credit unions that are regulated provincially. But knowing that there is a provincial watchdog making sure that banks aren't doing improper things and credit unions are behaving, that is something that gives me comfort, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think it would give the people of Saskatchewan comfort to know they're there.

Again, same with the pensions division. And we know pensions are very important. Especially as we get more and more grey hair, it's something that we think about more from day to day and the future of our retirements and how we'll look after our kids, ultimately through ensuring that there's a pension there for us when we retire from the workforce.

And then the payday loans division. Now that's an area that I know has somewhat of a nefarious reputation from time to time because of the high interest rates that are charged, and people that are desperate often need to deal with these institutions. But it provides a service for people in that spot, and knowing that we have a regulatory watchdog looking after those organizations again is something I think that the people of Saskatchewan would take comfort from. Same with consumer protection division. There's a number of Acts that this commission looks after, and I'll get into that in a bit.

At any rate, the SFSC's regulatory functions include both prudential and market conduct regulation. And this I'm taking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the web page for the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission. So they do regulation of prudentials and the market.

Prudential regulation, what it does is it addresses the financial soundness of regulated entities while market conduct regulation refers to supervising compliance related to consumer protection divisions. So that is more in the retail area of the market, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it includes disclosure, confidentiality, fair practices, and prohibited methods of doing business. So if I understand it correctly, the consumer protection provisions ensure that any agencies or businesses conducting consumer-related business are being watched and monitored by this particular commission.

[15:45]

So they have a mandate. The mandate of the SFSC is to oversee the protection of consumer interests through licensing. So that's one area they work in. Also they work in registration, audit, handling complaints, and enforcement activities under various provincial statutes.

So the types of Bills that they are administering, I can tell you in terms of financial services, they administer the credit union Acts. They administer *The Mortgage Brokerages and Mortgage Administrators Act*, *The Pension Benefits Act*, *The Real Estate Act*, *The Saskatchewan Insurance Act*, *The Securities Act*, and *The Trust and Loans Corporation Act*. So quite a wide range of financial services are being monitored and administered by the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission.

Then they go into the following . . . That includes the following financial institutions and entities. So credit unions, insurance companies, mortgage brokerages, mortgage brokers, securities dealers and advisors, and trust loan and financing corporations — that's quite a wide panoply of financial services institutions. And other financial services that are covered by the Act is the administration of pension plans, credit union services, financing and trust companies, lending generally, mortgage and loan brokering, sale of insurance products, and trading in or advising with respect to securities. Again a wide, wide range of financial services that are available to the citizens of the province. And this commission is responsible for ensuring that the services are conducted appropriately, and they oversee those institutions.

They also look at a number of consumer protection legislations. And this is an interesting list, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think there's a story behind this historically in our province. It seems to be somewhat disparate, but I think overall that the thought is these are areas that require this kind of supervision by this type of commission or, in this case, in the new Bill, a new Crown corporation to supervise this type of legislation.

So first off we have *The Auctioneers Act* — wouldn't have thought of that one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there it is. It's also administering *The Cemeteries Act*. Not a heavy area of retail activity, but is certainly one that we will all deal with at some point in our life. *The Charitable Fund-raising Businesses Act* — I don't know of any of those types of businesses, and I didn't know there was an Act, so that's interesting to see, and that's something I think that we might have some questions about. There's *The Collection Agents Act*, *The Consumer Protection Act*, *The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act*, *The Credit Reporting Act*, *The Direct Sellers Act* — and this is another Act that I've never had a look at, the direct sellers, so it will be interesting for me to look into that. *The Film and Video Classification Act*, that's one that I think we have heard about more in the news. There's also *The Funeral and Cremation Services Act*, *The Motor Dealers Act*, *The Payday Loans Act* and *The Ticket Sales Act*, and that's things like Ticketmaster sales to ensure that sales are being done appropriately and fairly for all consumers and that there's not advantages for big concerts where there's a high demand for tickets.

So again, now we know that this commission is actually looking after all of those items. And they were set up as a commission. The Act was passed originally in, it looks like,

2003. It's been amended a few times since. So this is a fairly new agency that's been set up, and indeed, a lot of the responsibilities and requirements under this Act are mirrored in the new Act, but there's new twists on the new Act.

So at this point I won't go into great detail on the existing Act. I do want to take a look at the new Bill. In part I, which is the preliminary part of the Bill, they list the types of consumer protection legislation that this new Crown corporation will be looking at. And again, it's *The Auctioneers Act*, *The Cemeteries Act*, and basically the same list that I just read that the previous commission was looking at. And there are some additions available under the regulations that are provided for in this new Bill.

And they have a new definition here called the consumer protection regulator. So a lot of these Bills that are referred to for consumer protection — or legislation, not Bills — that I just referred to, have a registrar or a director or a board. For example, the Film Classification Board has superintendents or appeal committees or registrars. All of those now are caught in this Act as a consumer protection regulator. So that is an important term in the Act.

Financial services is also defined in this Act and again it mirrors the types of financial services that we saw under the commission. So things like carrying on business as a credit union or a mortgage brokerage or administrator, administering pension plans, and dealing and investing in pension funds, selling and providing insurance, carrying on business as a payday lender, trading in or advising with respect to securities, lending money or dealing in or purchasing mortgages or security interests or accounts receivable, of course trading in real estate and acting as an investment fund manager and any other activity that the regulations may define. So the list of the financial services legislation is the same as that for the commission and then there's the catch-all clause at the end of the definition that ensures that if other areas need to be brought in by regulation, they can be.

Now we talked about the consumer protection regulators like the Film Classification Board. Now we talk about financial services regulators. Who are those people? Well it would be the registrar of credit unions, the superintendent of insurance or pensions or directors under *The Payday Loans Act*, and various other superintendents or registrars. So again this is another important term for this new Crown corporation and it's one that will direct them as to who the regulators are that they need to deal with.

So in part II of the Act under section 3, what it basically does is continues the commission and it now becomes the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan. Again I'm not sure why isn't it financial services and consumer affairs authority because there is a defined term of financial services in the Act. However that was the choice that was made and that's the way it's been presented. This is going to be a corporation, so that's the second part of the clause 3. And the third clause indicates it's a Treasury Board Crown corporation within the meaning of *The Crown Corporations Act* and head office in Regina obviously.

So in the previous commission there was a limit on the number

of members. In this case, in the membership of this particular authority there's no limit that I can see in the clause so I'm not sure why that change has been made at this point. It just says, those persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and then the minister also gets to appoint someone. So it doesn't tell us if it's a two-person board or authority or if there's 25. We don't know what the minimum or maximum is for this new authority.

So the members of the authority are appointed. And they don't hold their term for more than three years or until a successor is appointed, but they can be reappointed. And there's methods in here in section 4 in terms of how vacancies will be filled and what the Lieutenant Governor in Council will do in that event.

Here we have in section 5 the responsibilities of the authority. So here I want to read this one out because I think it's important to understand what this new Crown will be doing. So it's responsible to the minister. There's a direct line to the Minister of Justice on this one and in the exercise of the powers conferred on the authority and in the performance of the duties . . . So they're responsible to him for administering and enforcing the Act. They're responsible for administering and enforcing consumer protection legislation, financial services legislation, and any other Act that confers a duty or power on a consumer protection regulator or a financial services regulator. So there you see it. They're responsible for administering and enforcing this Act and the other legislation where there's regulators in the area of consumer protection or financial services.

They can also be assigned other duties by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and I've spoken about this before. It always makes me somewhat leery when we don't have the full extent of activities or functions described in the Bill itself and that it is pushed over to the regulatory sphere. Because once again, Executive Council and Lieutenant Governor in Council can make these changes with much less scrutiny. Indeed we don't even see the regulations until after they've been passed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a road to go down very carefully, I think, for governments. And they need to be sure that, as much as possible, there's scrutiny of the authorities and powers of things like a new Crown corporation, that they're scrutinized prior to the regulatory authority being granted. But that isn't the practice of this government at this point, and so just concerns raised about how the regulatory creation, creation of regulations takes place.

Clause 6 tells us that this is an agent of the Crown, which is often the case with Crown corporations. But it does have capacity to contract in its own corporate name, and that's section 7. So that's something that we often see with Crown corporations. And then also the liability. The authority may sue and be sued. Of course when it is sued, it's to the extent to which the Crown is subject pursuant to *The Proceedings against the Crown Act*, so there's always the protection for the Crown in that other statute, *The Proceedings against the Crown Act*.

Now here's the next layer that the minister was talking about in terms of this authority. So we have now the people appointed to the authority, and then we're adding a new layer, and it's a board of directors. And this is the new feature, I think. And the

reason the minister says this is an important Bill is that it will draw, this is the sentence I referred to earlier where he said it draws on the business expertise of a board of directors.

So I'm just wondering about this board of directors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and how the government will choose those members. Obviously they need to have business expertise. Concerning, of course, to us is who these individuals will be because if it is people familiar to the government in terms of their own personal relations, that's something I think that is of concern to the public, and we'll certainly be watching with close eyes in terms of who the minister chooses for the board.

Actually the board of directors, in terms of the organization, here is in clause 9, is established consisting of those appointed pursuant to 4(1). So not only are they members — I was getting the sense that it was another layer — but it's actually the same people. The authority and the board seem to be the same people. So he will be drawing upon people from the business community, it looks like, to become authority members first under section 4, and then under section 9. It looks like it's the same people. Section 9(1) reads, "The board of directors for the authority is established consisting of those persons appointed pursuant to subsection 4(1)," which is the people — we don't know how many — by the Lieutenant Governor, and then one person appointed by the minister.

So I question whether the minister's going to be doing a request for proposals or an open job application for that. What the responsibilities and the remuneration, we don't know what that is. Again the remuneration for these board members is fixed by Lieutenant Governor in Council. So again it's done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and then there's no opportunity for the public or the opposition to comment on the appropriateness of the remuneration. I'm not sure how it's established in the current Act.

Anyways, the board is responsible for managing the affairs and business of the authority. So if I am understanding this right, the authority and the board are one and the same. So I'm not sure why there's a need for both, and perhaps the minister will elaborate on that at some point in time.

There's obviously the members are entitled to be reimbursed for travel and incidental living expenses in their performance of their responsibilities. That makes sense. And if there is a vacancy of a member, it doesn't impair the board to act with that vacancy.

Again, Lieutenant Governor in Council is the one who's going to designate one member of the board as chairperson and another member of the board as Vice-Chair. We will look carefully at those appointments and try and understand why the government chose them, and on what basis.

And then there's a number of administrative clauses that close out this division of the Act in terms of how the meetings are to be conducted. Division 3 talks about the executive director and employees, so I think this is the transition clauses that the minister was talking about where the existing employees will be transitioned over to the new Crown corporation. It has to be done by appointment and the authority may do that. So as long as the Lieutenant Governor in Council is okay with it, the

authority itself can appoint their own executive director. And I think the minister indicated that in this case it will continue the appointments of the current commission members and the executive director into the new authority. And I'm not seeing that clause here in the Act. I'm sure it's here somewhere if the minister said it's here.

[16:00]

Again it's interesting to note that this new Crown corporation is continuing the executive director into the new authority but that for whatever reason the Tourism Authority is not having its executive director continued, or promised to be continued into the new Crown corporation. There seems to be a disconnect there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm not sure what the reasoning would be for such a one-eighty on the part of the government to treat executive directors in such a different way. And we certainly have no indication from the comments of either the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport as to why this particular Crown continues the executive director but that other new Crown, tourism Crown, will not. And it's not built into the comments of the ministers. So I guess we can only wait and see what's going to happen with Tourism Saskatchewan.

So in clause 13 it describes about how the executive director shall act in the new role of the new Crown. And it goes on to talk about employees as well. Obviously remuneration and superannuation and benefits are dealt with in section 14. And then we go into part III of the Bill which is a substantive part of the Bill. Part III and part IV deal with financial services protection. And then part IV is the consumer protection. So what it does is it tells us what the responsibilities of the authority are for financial services. And we see that it's responsible for a number of things — coordinating the regulators. So the regulators I talked about earlier, this authority's now responsible for coordinating them and providing them with administration, development, promotion, all sorts of policies related to financial services, administering *The Securities Act*, performing other responsibilities. So there's a big list of what the authority is responsible for in relation to financial services.

And also the powers of the authority are described in section 16 where they can exercise powers given to them under the various financial services legislations. And also they can make grants to people — although I know this government doesn't like making grants — and they will make grants here to any person, agency, organization, association, institution, or body on any terms they consider appropriate for any purpose relating to its responsibilities for financial services.

So I'm glad to see that financial service organizations get grants from the government because we certainly know that the film and tax industry isn't. So at least it's not wiped out 100 per cent. That's good news. Do any other thing that it considers necessary. So there's the last clause is the catch-all clause.

If they do give a grant greater than \$50,000, though — this is at least one thing that's reassuring — that Lieutenant Governor in Council needs to approve it. So they are able to give quite large grants, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and anything under \$50,000 they don't need approval of the government for.

Again I guess because this is a budgetary Bill, we need to get a sense of what the actual costs are, and unfortunately the minister made no comment on that in his introductory remarks. So we're left in a bit of a void here in terms of how this is going to impact the taxpayer. We'll certainly look at the estimates to see if there's more information there, but certainly in the minister's comments we don't have anything that tells us why this is a budgetary Bill.

Now seeing that the authority can issue quite significant grants and certainly there's no limit — the only limit being that the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council is needed if it's over the \$50,000 — that tells me that this authority will have access to significant dollars to make these grants.

There's a number of other types of powers that are described in clause 16. And in clause 17 there's an authority, if the minister so chooses, to create a list of persons to serve on a panel if the authority considers it advisable. And so the authority can also strike a panel to look after or at least to hear any matter that the authority is authorized or required to hear pursuant to the Act. So that's established by order by the minister, and there's a number of other rules in relation to the panel.

Part IV, consumer protection, section 19, again the responsibility to the authority described there is similar to the responsibilities described in part III for financial services. And in section 20, we again see the similar powers of authority. In this case they can also “. . . make grants to any person, agency, organization, association, institution or body . . . for any purpose relating to its responsibilities for consumer protection.”

So I suppose if one of the regulatory bodies decided they needed to do some sort of research for their particular area that they're responsible for, the authority could provide them with a grant to do that kind of research.

Part V is just the general powers, so there's different ways for the authority to get evidence. And they can get evidence outside Saskatchewan or make an order if they want to get evidence. So it's a fairly heavy authority, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's one that seems to make it somewhat quasi tribunal. So this is a board that is able to make rules regarding hearings, and make its own rules how it conducts its business. Again I think that's something we'll need to keep an eye on because those types of quasi court-type powers are great and can affect people severely. So we need to keep an eye on those.

There's an ability in section 24 to direct an inquiry on any question or matter before or over which it has jurisdiction. So they can have inquiries. They can have hearings. And in section 25 they can have investigations as well. So again this is a very quasi court-looking Crown corporation. It's not often, I think, that you see Crown corporations that have these kinds of powers in order to make those types of investigations. So we will be watching that with interest as well if this Bill is indeed passed and enacted.

There's a number of other clauses in this section about conflict of interest and non-compellability. And that's one clause that I think a person has to read out loud in order to understand, and I will do that now because it's an interesting clause in terms of language. So section 29 reads:

Subject to section 30, a member of the authority, the executive director, any employee of the authority, a person authorized pursuant to section 21 to obtain evidence, a member of a panel, a person appointed to make an inquiry and report pursuant to section 24 and a person appointed to make an investigation pursuant to section 25 [there we are; now we get to it] are not compellable to give evidence in any court or in a proceeding of a judicial nature concerning any information that comes to the knowledge of that person in the exercise of the powers, the performance of the responsibilities or the carrying out of the functions of that person pursuant to this Act, the regulations, any financial services legislation or any consumer protection legislation.

So I think, if I understand this, basically it's that anybody who's giving evidence or who's involved in any of these inquiries is not required to give evidence in court. I think that's what that section says.

There's a disclosure clause in section 30, and of course there's an immunity clause which is even longer than the non-compellability clause. But again any person that's involved in any of these types of things — which is about six lines in the section — they're protected and immune if they're doing it in good faith. So this is a protection for the people in these regulatory functions and these investigations.

Now in part VI, we get into the financial matters of the new corporation, the new Crown corporation. And I guess that's where my questions will be in terms of how this is affecting the budget and the bottom line for the Saskatchewan taxpayers. And then we see . . . The first section that we find out is that the Minister of Finance can loan monies to the authority out of the GRF or the General Revenue Fund for the purposes of the authority. So we know they can get loans from the Minister of Finance and this is going to be done through Lieutenant Governor in Council authorization in accordance with *The Financial Administration Act*.

So first of all, this new Crown corporation can borrow money from the government. They can also borrow temporarily, under section 33 by way of temporary loans from any bank, credit union or person, any monies by way of a bank overdraft or any other way they determine if they so choose. So that's a temporary borrowing, which I guess I assume then any borrowing from the Minister of Finance is not temporary. And I'm not sure what that implies or what effect it will have on the taxpayer. And they can also invest their capital or operating monies in securities if they choose to do so and dispose of them in any way they seem expedient.

So they can . . . In the second part of section 34, Lieutenant Governor in Council, here's something: the Lieutenant Governor in Council could appoint the Minister of Finance or any other person to be the agent of the authority for the purposes of making investments. So if they need an agent, it looks like the Minister of Finance can act for them in that capacity if it is the will of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and it gives the Minister of Finance or any person that they do appoint all the powers they need to take care of that type of business.

So other than, you know, fiscal year Treasury Board orders and directives and the audit, it seems like these are fairly straightforward clauses for the rest of that part. And then finally, part VII is just the repeal of the current Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission. And there's a transitional clause that the minister referred to in his opening comments yesterday, which is section 43. And this talks about the transition of, the transfer of employees. And the first section reads:

Notwithstanding any Act, law or provision of a contract, for the purpose of facilitating the administration and enforcement of this Act, consumer protection legislation, financial services legislation and any other Act that opposes or confers a duty, power, or function on a consumer protection regulator or a financial services regulator, the chairperson of the Public Service Commission may transfer any employees in the public service within the meaning of *The Public Service Act, 1998* to, and cause them to become employees of the authority.

So it looks like not only employees from the commission are eligible to be transferred over but it may mean that there are other employees as well within the public service that could be transferred to this new Crown corporation.

And the Act goes on in section 43(2) to say that any transfer described in the previous section does not constitute the abolition or termination of any position or job. So I think it tells us that those jobs they are coming from may not be abolished, although if they come from the Financial Services Commission, that doesn't exist any more so those jobs will certainly be abolished. It doesn't require advance notice and does not constitute constructive dismissal of any person or a breach of contract. So it's a fairly technical job protection clause. And it doesn't tell us for certain that all the employees from the current commission will be transferred although the minister is indicating that it will. So maybe this wording is a bit more complex than I can sort out at this point, but I will take a closer look at it, and I'm sure my colleagues will as well because I'm not quite getting to the minister's comments where he said it continues their appointments. And I'm sure the language is there, but it's a bit more obtuse than I can get my head around at this particular point.

The former fund is being transferred over. Again I'm not certain how much money is in the former fund, and we'll be looking at that with interest, Madam Deputy Speaker, because this is taxpayers' dollars that we're dealing with. So we're going to make sure that the winding up of the former fund is appropriate and that the funds were transferred appropriately over to this new Crown.

Similarly clause 45 is the transfer of assets and liabilities of the existing commission, so that's going to take place as well.

Oh and I think I may have arrived at the clause that I was looking for, transitional 46, and this is the one I think the minister is referring to. Those persons who were members of the commission on the day before the coming into force of this Act constitute the members of the authority and members of this board, and they're deemed to have been appointed. So we

know now at section 46 that the commission members are carried over from the Securities Commission over to this new Crown corporation. And they will hold office for the remainder of the terms that they were appointed in their original appointment and then this Act will then take over.

The people that were chairperson or vice-chairperson are also deemed to be designated as the new chairperson or vice-chairperson. And then here's the clause of interest to me, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's 46(3):

The person who was the executive director of the commission on the day before the coming into force of this Act:

is deemed to have been appointed pursuant to [this Act]
...

So we know for certain that the existing executive director has job protection and will be carried on in the transition to this new Crown.

What we don't know is the fate of the executive director of the Saskatchewan Tourism Authority, which is now being converted to a similar Crown corporation. But there are no assurances in that Bill that leads us to believe that that executive director is being provided the same security as this director. That raises some very serious questions, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think it would be a great concern how this government can do a complete one-eighty when they're treating people who are respected executive directors in public authorities.

So that's something I think we're going to need to look at very closely, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that's section 46(3) of this new Act, the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan. Part VIII is the consequential and coming into force sections, which I won't go into any great detail because they're consequential and just necessary amendments that make sure all the other Bills are properly referring now to this new Crown corporation.

[16:15]

So I think in conclusion on this particular Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, there's a number of questions that we have. Why is this necessary? Why wasn't the commission good enough? What is it afforded any difference now that it . . . Why are we creating another Crown, other than it gives the government more control over the activities of the commission?

And it says the idea of the corporation is to draw on the business expertise of a board of directors to assess the needs of the marketplace without compromising the government's need to manage the province's financial affairs. I would really like to get more explanation from the minister on why this new Crown is designed to do that when it appears to be based on the fairly similar functions and authorities that the commission was based on. So it's just a bit of a mystery about that.

And as I said earlier, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the biggest issue with this particular Bill isn't what it does but how it treats people differently than the tourism Crown corporation

that's being created right now, which has no such assurances for the board of directors and the executive director and the employees of that particular authority. I think it's unfair treatment and certainly would like some explanation from this government as to why they feel it's appropriate to treat people so differently.

So at that point, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that's the extent of my comments on Bill No. 39, *An Act respecting the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. So I would like to move to adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Tell): — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 39, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Tell): — Carried.

Bill No. 40

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 40** — *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Consequential Amendment Act, 2012/Loi de 2012 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act* be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Tell): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Again this is a consequential amendment Act resulting from the enactment of *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act*. And given that it is three clauses long, I think my comments on this one will be somewhat shorter than my previous comments.

First of all though, I will want to take a look at the comments from the minister when he introduced, spoke to the second reading in this Bill yesterday. And his comments are quite short as well, with reason, and I totally understand that. At any rate he indicated it was the consequential amendments to the previous Bill that he introduced, and he restated the goal for Bill 39 — it's to respond quickly and effectively to market demands facing regulation of financial services and consumer protection.

So again this is, we hear a lot from this government is the ability to act quickly when dealing with regulation. And that is somewhat concerning because regulation can be complex. And unless the civil service, the civil servants are properly equipped with resources and staff to ensure that these complex regulations are followed properly, there's always concern that monitoring compliance of regulatory structures are not able to be followed. And that applies not only to financial services and consumer protection, but obviously environmental protection and other types of protection that exist within our regulatory sphere.

So I always am worried when people are in a rush to get through regulations. They're there for a reason, and they should be. It should be followed to the law and not overlooked at all. So if this is the reason why we need a Crown instead of a commission, the minister's comments don't really tell us why that is. And we will look to him for more explanation of why a Crown is necessary to do this kind of regulatory supervision when the commission was doing just fine as far as we, as far as we understand.

At any rate, he goes on to say that this Bill No. 40 is just a companion piece to Bill No. 39. It's bilingual which is always good to see when we have notre loi en français, alors. [Translation: our law in French, then.] He also made a couple comments about the fact that Royal Recommendation was not received in time to appear in the order paper. But he made the point and informed us that the Lieutenant Governor did in fact recommend it to the consideration of the Assembly although it didn't appear in the order paper. So he amended that oversight in his comments yesterday.

So this Bill has three clauses. And the first clause is basically the name of the Bill. And although it's a short title clause, it isn't short at all. It is *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Consequential Amendment Act, 2012*. That's the first section. Second section only changes the definition of "board" in *The Co-operatives Act, 1996*. And I assume that wasn't one of the consequential changes in the previous Bill because it is a bilingual Bill, so it had to be carried through separately in this Bill. And of course this Act will come into force on the day that the section 1 of *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act* comes into force.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that's all the comments I'll make on this particular Bill at this point in time. I know my colleagues will want to speak to it as well. So I would like to . . . I hear one of the members think there's more to this than there is, but maybe if he reads it he'll see that there really isn't much to this Bill. So I think at this point I'd like to move to adjourn this Bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of Bill No. 40, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Consequential Amendment Act, 2012*. 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 Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to join in on the adjourned debates and specifically look

at Bill No. 26, an Act to repeal miscellaneous obsolete statutes . . . statutes, pardon me, not obsolete statutes. We're actually adding statutes here at the Assembly, I'm told. But this is to repeal miscellaneous obsolete statutes, Mr. Speaker.

And this Act here, No. 26, it's a bit of a catch bag of a few different things. There's five different components to this piece of legislation addressing different pieces of legislation that now need to be repealed, in the government's opinion, based on changes that have occurred in the province or the fact that the pieces of legislation aren't current or that they have, there's been review and changes have occurred. And therefore the legislation ought to be adjusted, in this case repealed, in order to reflect the current reality that is seen.

So, Mr. Speaker, the first . . . I should state actually that the minister responsible, the Minister of Justice moved second reading of this Bill, Bill No. 26, on March 5th, 2012, for individuals who are curious about reading his second reading speech. And in his remarks, Mr. Speaker, he did provide some comments about what the different components of this Act are and the different bits of legislation that are being addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the first piece of legislation that is being addressed here, it is being repealed, is *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*, and it was passed, Mr. Speaker, in 2005. This piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, deals with some specific agreements that were between IPSCO and the United Steelworkers of America Local 5890 and Shaw Pipe Protection Limited and the Construction and General Workers' Union Local 180. Mr. Speaker, the minister's remarks stated that in 2008 the government enacted amendments to *The Trade Union Act* which repealed subsection 33(3), and as a result, the employers in eight unions are able to negotiate collective agreements for a term that is appropriate for the parties.

So, Mr. Speaker, changes were made, according to the minister's remarks, that allowed the parties to decide what is an appropriate duration for the contract and, as such, this piece of legislation that was in place, *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*, is no longer needed in the government's opinion. This piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, I guess by the minister's own explanation, it would appear to be fairly straightforward and not having a very wide application because it does state which Locals are affected here and which companies are affected here.

However, Mr. Speaker, when we look at members opposite track record when it comes to legislation having an effect on working people and organized labour in the province, there have been a number of problems that we've seen with the government's approach over the past number of years. And I can think of different pieces of legislation, whether it'd be Bill 5, Bill 6, whether it'd be Bill 43 or Bill 80. We have seen instances, Mr. Speaker, where the government charted a course in what they thought was appropriate without the necessary type of consultation and discussion with the parties being affected by the proposed changes.

So, Mr. Speaker, while this one component here of Bill No. 26, which is the repeal of *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*, it may not seem that significant,

whenever we're dealing with pieces of legislation that are in the realm of labour and working people and organized labour, Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns that members opposite have done the appropriate type of consultation and discussion with the groups and organizations that will be affected. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't have any cause for concern. But based on the track record, I think there is some need, and I think concern is warranted to some degree.

So that is the first component, Mr. Speaker, of this miscellaneous statutes repeal Act, and that was the repeal of *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exemption Act* which was passed originally in 2005.

The next component, Mr. Speaker, that we see is the repeal of *The Communications Network Corporation Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, this Act that established the Saskatchewan Communications Network, or SCN as it's commonly referred to. When we think of, Mr. Speaker, the issue of SCN, it's really tied into a much larger discussion that has been playing out in the province over the past few weeks and the past couple of months, I would say, but actually going back further than that, Mr. Speaker, going back to actions that members opposite have chosen to pursue over the last number of years.

And this, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the type of activity that we want in our province and want to encourage in our province and see in our province when it comes to film and television and when it comes to encouraging local productions that do very important things, Mr. Speaker. We know that the type of activity that occurs with the film industry for film and television is very important.

And this is a discussion that does tie into current changes, fairly recent changes that we saw come down in the recent budget, and that was the elimination of the employment film tax credit and the negative effect that that is having and will have in the months and years ahead here in the province. And so I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at issues like SCN and the role that it played and once played, and with the sale of SCN to Bluepoint and the current situation, and then it really ties into a larger story and larger concerns that many people here in the province have about this government's approach to the film industry.

We know the film industry is so important to our province for a number of reasons. But I would divide those reasons up into perhaps two categories. And the one, Mr. Speaker, would be for economic reasons it's very important. And we think of the large number of people here in the province, especially in Regina I should say, that have made a living and have earned their dollars and paid their taxes because of their involvement with the film industry. And so we know that there's individuals that are involved.

And we also know, Mr. Speaker, that many of the businesses in the community have benefited greatly because of the film industry in Saskatchewan. When there is film activity and television activity here in the province, many businesses benefit. You can think, Mr. Speaker, of retail stores that sell clothing and the amount of costumes and wardrobes that are purchased for different productions and how important that is to the businesses. Members will recall stories of one individual

business here, Mr. Speaker, that a production was being made and someone came in, a wardrobe person came in and bought, I think it was, \$8,000 worth of clothing. And that has a real positive effect on local businesses.

Other examples, Mr. Speaker, could include car rentals. When there is a production and that sets up shop in a particular area, they will of course rent vehicles of different sizes. And that's very important to local businesses.

We can also think, Mr. Speaker, of the hotels that would be present and the restaurants that would be present in this city. How individuals could do their day working of course, but then of course also in the evening go out and have meals, go to pubs, go to restaurants, and support the local industry either for hotels or for restaurants or for pubs. And that's very important of course, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

So there's most certainly the economic argument, but there's also a very strong cultural argument that can be made and is made and is very clear in my opinion of how, when we have Saskatchewan stories and we're able to tell them through film and television, that that really benefits all Saskatchewan people and it puts us on the map in many important ways.

Of course the most commonly known example is *Corner Gas*. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that this is a series that plays around the world, across Canada and helped, I think helps show Saskatchewan people as down-to-earth people, common sense people, a people with a good senses of humour and with a unique culture here on the Prairies that we like to share. And I think *Corner Gas* played a very important role. And we have heard from individuals involved with that production, Mr. Speaker, how some of the negative steps and approaches that we've seen by members opposite, how *Corner Gas* wouldn't have come to pass in the province if the members' decisions had been in place at the time of its creation.

When we think of telling this story, and this certainly has a relevance for SCN because SCN, Mr. Speaker, traditionally has played a very important role in telling Saskatchewan stories. I can think of the *Wapos Bay* production in Saskatoon. And I've had the pleasure to visit the production area in Saskatoon where *Wapos Bay* is created. And it's a, I'm not sure if I have the correct terminology, but claymation, and they have these . . .

An Hon. Member: — Stop-motion animation.

Mr. Broten: — Stop-motion animation is the correct term, Mr. Speaker. They have these amazing little displays and sets where they take these photos and link them together and make a great production that tells a uniquely Saskatchewan story, again, to a very wide audience beyond our borders. It tells the story to people in Saskatchewan, but it tells the story also to those beyond our borders. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that this has been widely recognized in the broader public and in the Canadian context because, when we look at *Wapos Bay* production, we know that they've received Gemini Awards and received international acclaim as well through different venues.

So when we look at this decision here, Mr. Speaker, when we

look at the consequence of previous actions by the government of repealing *The Communications Network Corporation Act*, it really ties in to a much larger story, and a story where we've seen steps taken by members opposite that have not been positive for Saskatchewan people, in my opinion, and not positive for the Saskatchewan economy, in my opinion.

So I think it's important always, and it's a good example and a good reminder to all of us, when we have a small piece of legislation, when we look at Bill No. 26, it really is just a few short sentences saying certain that Acts are repealed. But when you look at the information that is there, when you look at what is actually being repealed, it tells a much broader story and a very important story and one that I think doesn't deserve to be glossed over.

So, Mr. Speaker, the first component that was being repealed through this miscellaneous statutes repeal Act is *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*. The second piece, Mr. Speaker, is *The Communications Network Corporation Act*.

And now the third piece of legislation that's being repealed through *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2011* is *The On-farm Quality Assurance Programs Act*. And this, Mr. Speaker, is an Act that came into effect in '98, and the purpose of it was to provide a way for on-farm food safety programs to be recognized in Saskatchewan. So producers who wanted to do, I assume, value-add opportunities with what they were doing and wanted a way to have their product licensed and determined that it was safe and good for market, this was a mechanism that allowed for that to occur.

Now by the minister's second reading speech it indicates that this was all done, that the Act that was brought in in '98 was done before the Canadian Food Inspection Agency agreed to its role in on-farm food safety, or OFFS as the acronym would suggest.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, there are changes that occur in government policy and changes that occur between agreements between different orders of government, between federal and provincial. And in this instance, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CFIA, has agreed to take on this type of work and provide this type of service for producers. And, Mr. Speaker, perhaps whether that's a good or a bad decision, that's a discussion, a different policy discussion for a different day.

But it does raise a few concerns, especially as it relates to current events and current changes that we've seen from the federal government. And we know with CFIA there have been significant concerns raised in the media over the past number of months and how the federal government has been treating the CFIA with respect to allowing it to do its role as it ought to and as it needs to do in order to ensure that the food that Canadian consumers eat and the food that we ship abroad for trade, Mr. Speaker, is in fact as safe and sound as everyone wants it to be and expects it to be.

So while the change can be made by the provincial government in going down this path, I think we do need to keep on our radar the concerns that have been voiced and raised with respect to

the ability of CFIA to do the job that it needs to do. And I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that that is something that would be recognized by the provincial government and it would be recognized indeed by the federal government. Because as has been mentioned in recent days, there have been steps, Mr. Speaker, by the federal government to the province with respect to agriculture that have been detrimental and that have not had a positive effect or will not have a positive effect in the months and years to come.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that when we see that kind of example and that kind of treatment from the federal government to the province of Saskatchewan, it is my sincere hope, Mr. Speaker, that the provincial government would be a strong voice in promoting Saskatchewan's interests, a strong voice in ensuring that Saskatchewan is being treated well. And that includes, Mr. Speaker, of course within the realm of agriculture, and would include agricultural activity and in this area, Mr. Speaker, would include the role that CFIA does in the province. I think that is very important.

So the first piece of legislation being repealed in the miscellaneous statutes Act, Mr. Speaker, is *The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act*. The second piece is *The Communications Network Corporation Act*. The third piece is *The On-Farm Quality Assurance Programs Act*. And the fourth piece, Mr. Speaker, is *The Soil Drifting Control Act*. And as the minister stated in his second reading speech, that this is in fact a fairly old piece of legislation. It came into force back in 1941, before I was certainly around and before any of us were sitting in the legislature. Perhaps some of the members here were around then, but that would be . . . perhaps not as well.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the soil drifting Act goes back to '41. And this is an example, as I said in my remarks, where policies change. And as the minister has stated in his speech — I'll have to take him at his word here, Mr. Speaker — that this is a piece of legislation that has been rarely used and accordingly is perhaps no longer appropriate, especially with development and changes that have occurred in the area of agriculture and throughout rural Saskatchewan. So it is in some ways a housekeeping piece of legislation. This change to repeal it is in fact housekeeping, determining that it is not appropriate or no longer necessary. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, members opposite, the minister has suggested that it be repealed at this time. So that covers the fourth piece.

And now, Mr. Speaker, the final piece, the fifth component is the repeal of *The Special Payment (Dependent Spouses) Act*. And as the minister said, this was something that was brought in in 1999. And it basically provided a mechanism for widows whose workers' compensation benefits were terminated due to remarriage prior to September 1st of '85. And as the minister stated, to receive payment a widow had to apply within a two-year period following enactment of the legislation, and sign the waiver. The minister said that given the limitation on application of the benefits, there is no further need for the legislation. Furthermore, two court challenges to the Act have been dismissed.

So again this is in some ways, Mr. Speaker, it would seem, by the minister's explanation at least, that it is of a housekeeping

nature, no longer relevant because of the timelines involved with the piece of legislation, and that there haven't been problems that have come about as a result of court action. So again, Mr. Speaker, I will take the minister at his word that this is appropriate. If it is not, Mr. Speaker, that is concerning.

But we do know when we're dealing with special payments, I guess when we're dealing with issues of wills, when we're dealing with issues of entitlement for widows or widowers, it's a very trying and troubling time for people when they lose their life partner and their loved one. And I can think of just recently, Mr. Speaker, helping out a constituent who had come into the office with respect to some pension matters of her partner. And it is a trying time. It's a difficult time in one's life. And it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that the policies and the legislation that we have in place as a provincial government truly allow for the government to respond in such a way that is appropriate for the individual and allows the individual to conduct their personal business and have their orders in affair and receive any entitlement to pensions or benefits that they are entitled to in a timely manner so that they can have the quality of life that is needed. And I know it was the member from Nutana who was in her previous speech talking about, or two speeches ago, talking about the role of pensions and how very important that is for pensioners and seniors in the province.

And I would say, Mr. Speaker, when we consider some of the possible changes, I guess, not possible, but some of the changes coming with old age security and what that means for individuals approaching retirement in the years to come, these are issues that we need to keep in mind and ensure that we're responding in a way that is appropriate, effective, and in the best interest of Saskatchewan people.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, I said that this piece of legislation, *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act*, was quite diverse and bit of a catch-all of a number of different components. I think it would be fair to characterize that most of them, Mr. Speaker, as housekeeping in nature and in cleanup, I suppose, or modernizing of legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, in each piece of legislation, though they are all different, though they have and had different application and had different levels of relevance to Saskatchewan people, it's important to remember that each of these pieces of legislation tell a story and raise very important issues for Saskatchewan people.

And whether it is issues to do with collective bargaining, whether it's issues to do with the film industry here in the province, whether it's about the safety and quality of our food here in Saskatchewan, whether it's about environmental practices in rural Saskatchewan with respect to soil conservation, whether, Mr. Speaker, it has to do with pensions and benefits for widows and widowers, it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we look at every piece of legislation thoroughly and ensure that the changes and, in this case, the repealing of these pieces of legislation is in fact the appropriate and smart course of action.

So I have enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to provide my thoughts and my views on Bill No. 26, *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2011* and with that I would conclude my remarks.

But I would move to adjourn debate on this piece of legislation at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of 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. 33

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 33 — *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2011*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With certain interest I rise to participate in debates on Bill No. 33, *An Act to amend The Residential Tenancies Act*.

This piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, of course, was the Sask Party's offering when it came to the whole question of skyrocketing rents in the province of Saskatchewan, and means to, I guess, appear to be doing something. But in terms of the real effect on the ground, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the situation with renters dealing with a particularly tight rental market — last stats I'd seen, Mr. Speaker, with CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation], the vacancy rate being point six per cent in the city of Regina alone, and certainly that's not unusual in terms of the circumstances around the province — obviously there's still some huge problems as regards housing in this province. And that this government brought this legislation forward as some kind of a . . . I don't know what other way to term it other than perhaps as a PR exercise, as an attempt to appear to be doing something as the members brought this forward.

[16:45]

And it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that we're not sure where this is winding up with the sector itself, whether or not this legislation, should it reach — I presume it'll be passed in this session — what happens to it from there, Mr. Speaker, and whether or not the sector will actually take this forward. Because we hear different things through channels around continued sort of solicitation of opinion and advice from different actors in the sector. And again, Mr. Speaker, it sort of moves in lockstep with the way that this piece of legislation first came forward, where there seemed to be surprise on the part of actors that are being relied upon in this legislation to help out in the terms of this. So whether or not this even proceeds, Mr. Speaker, we'll be very interested to see how that works out.

Certainly there's a broad front of action that is required when it comes to dealing with the housing crisis as it presents in Saskatchewan. But I guess, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we found very frustrating on this side of the House in terms of surveying the actions of the government since they took power

in 2007 is one of the first acts undertaken by those members was to cut the budget of the Sask Housing Corporation and then after that to appoint the Pringle Merriman task force to buy some time. And then it spends its time roaming the province coming up with solid recommendations and then the way that that didn't put a dent into the housing crisis, Mr. Speaker, but in fact we saw things get worse.

Then there was a change in minister in that department, Mr. Speaker, and again a lot of good words put forward in terms of wanting to address the problem, but the main sort of concrete action that we saw coming forward was to hold another conference and then to top that off with a nice summit, and then of course we've got these different action plans going forward.

And it's not to say that there haven't been some measures that are worthwhile on this front, Mr. Speaker. I think we agree very much with the move around Habitat for Humanity and I'm certainly on the record agreeing with that move on the part of this government as regards providing funds to Habitat for Humanity to do a better job of what they do in the province. And certainly I know in inner-city Regina, Habitat, especially after the reorganization in 2006, has been a much more active partner in the inner city, operating in conjunction with things like for example, T-CAP, the Thom carpentry apprenticeship program or with the Transition to Trades program, the good work that is done there, but also helping to underwrite the work of Habitat for Humanity. Again we're on record as saying that it was the dollars that were extended to Habitat for Humanity, those were good dollars extended.

But again the housing crisis ground on and, you know, for too many years, Mr. Speaker, under this government, we saw the main actor, the main fighter on the housing front being Habitat for Humanity when the government should've been there in a much more vigorous way, instead of standing back, punting things off to committees and to task forces and summits. And it's only of late, Mr. Speaker, that we've seen any sort of solid action on this front.

And again there's some good, good programs, good measures that have come forward in the relatively recent past as regards increasing the housing supply, which is a vital part of the problem. If you're going to take on the housing crisis in Saskatchewan, certainly the good work of the folks at Ranch Ehrlo and work as the units that have been just opened up over on Victoria, just off Victoria, which is in Regina Elphinstone, Mr. Speaker. We're glad to see that the government can see clear to partnership, to partner with a valuable organization like Ranch Ehrlo that has a very solid and commendable track record when it comes to working for children, working for families, working for people in risk, but also working on the housing front, Mr. Speaker. We were glad to see that come forward.

We're also glad to see the work with Street Culture Kidz and the opening of the youth shelter, and certainly that's worth, worth applauding, Mr. Speaker. But again in my constituency in inner-city Regina I know that these measures, which are positive, are in the balance with the fact that rent has gone up considerably. The fact that Sask Housing units, which used to be rent-geared-to-income and which used to be a much more vital benefit for many seniors on fixed income in Regina

Elphinstone-Centre, we've seen rents increase significantly for seniors on fixed income in various of those units through Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

And also the kind of gains that have been made in terms of the work that it unfolded under the aegis of the inner city community partnership and the good work of the housing bylaw standards enforcement team, and the way that that had improved, root and branch, the quality of housing stock in communities like my home community of North Central. We saw a lot of good progress that had been made be stalled for the first four years of this government. And again, some good measures on the one hand in terms of the work of Habitat for Humanity, some good work in terms of the community partners like Ranch Ehrlo finally getting projects through the gates, or Street Culture Kidz.

But again, Mr. Speaker, if you talk to people in Regina Elphinstone-Centre and if you knock on doors as I did, you know, certainly during the election, or if you talk to my neighbours as I do quite often, Mr. Speaker, if you talk to people coming into my office on 5th and Retallack, and if you go knocking on doors as I had the opportunity to do so last Sunday afternoon in Regina Elphinstone-Centre, housing is still a big crisis. And it's still a big problem in terms of how people put it together to make a good life for themselves and their families. And too many people are still in that circumstance where it's very, very hard to keep body and soul together and to put food on the table and to make sure that they've got a decent roof over their head.

And in terms of the kind of gains that were made in the improvement of housing stock, that relied on people having options and places to go in terms of alternative accommodation, in terms of shutting down places that shouldn't be operating and shouldn't be deemed fit for human habitation, but were, Mr. Speaker, and are being again because of the tight circumstance where people are being confronted with this terrible bargain of choosing between bad accommodation and no accommodation. And you know, still, Mr. Speaker, we see cases come forward where we talk to people who are living in tents, Mr. Speaker, where we see people that should be enjoying the golden years of their lives, and I think about one couple in particular, Mr. Speaker, that spent the summer living in a teepee over by the firing range by the Dojack Centre, Mr. Speaker.

And again this is very much part and parcel of a housing crisis, hugely tight housing market, and the way that this government has not responded in a sufficient manner to solve the problem. I think also about the fact that the voluntary compliance sort of aspects of this and how they are, I think, less than satisfactory. And again we're not sure if they're even going to carry forward with this, Mr. Speaker.

There's a lot more to be said about this, but in the interests of making sure that other of my colleagues can get into the debate — and certainly I would attach myself to the comments of our critic, the member from Saskatoon Centre, on this file — but with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 33.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of

debate on Bill No. 33, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 34

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Bjornerud that **Bill No. 34** — *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation 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 at this hour of the day to join in on discussion . . . rejoin discussion on Bill No. 34. And having had a chance to make some remarks earlier on, Mr. Speaker, on this piece of legislation, my remarks today will not be too extensive.

But I do want to perhaps actually first start off, Mr. Speaker, by saying congratulations to the Minister of Agriculture. I think since the time that I spoke, he announced that he was leaving cabinet at some point and I know that's probably a difficult, or perhaps maybe not that difficult of a decision for one to make in their working career, having served and . . . But I spoke to him today in the lunch line, and he seemed quite positive about the future. So I would like to offer him my congratulations.

This piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is to provide the legislative authority for the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation to administer the crop insurance and AgriStability. And, Mr. Speaker, as was stated by the minister in his remarks that there was temporary legislation in place but this, Mr. Speaker, is to provide a more permanent solution. The legislation that's being proposed here by the minister also provides the possibility for future programs such as coverage for livestock. So that is, that door is left open and the possibility is there.

Mr. Speaker, we see in the minister's remarks some changes and some things that he's talked about in terms of his steps that he's wanted to make. And, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I haven't had the good fortune of growing up on a farm, but I've married into a farming family, so I know how important these types of programs are for farm families. And, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the changes will in fact help producers here in the province. But, Mr. Speaker, there are of course always concerns.

But this piece of legislation that we see here, Mr. Speaker, is for the most part, Mr. Speaker, moving the legislative authority for a program from a temporary basis into a more permanent one. And again, similar to the speech I gave earlier on today, Mr. Speaker, about the miscellaneous statutes, that this is more of a program of housekeeping in nature, or more of a legislative proposal, I suppose, of a housekeeping nature as opposed to a reworking how everything is done.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, there always are important considerations to look at when any sort of legislative change is being proposed or is being made. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that colleagues in the Assembly here will have voiced questions and concerns that they've had so far with respect to these programs and will do so in the future. And, Mr. Speaker, we saw with some recent changes, as has been talked about recently from the federal level to the province, we know that when we look at programs and services provided to farmers here in the province that there have been some changes that do cause some concern.

So it is important, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the programs and the services in place to assist producers here in Saskatchewan that they are in fact as current as they should be, as relevant as they should be, and as effective as they should be. I know that's the intent of all members. We may have different opinions and different approaches in terms of how we think that should occur.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have enjoyed the opportunity on two occasions to speak to this piece of legislation, Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, having had the opportunity on two occasions to speak to this piece of legislation, I thank the Assembly for the chance to do so and I would move to adjourn debate now on Bill No. 34. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It being very near the time of adjournment, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned till 10 a.m. Thursday morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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