



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

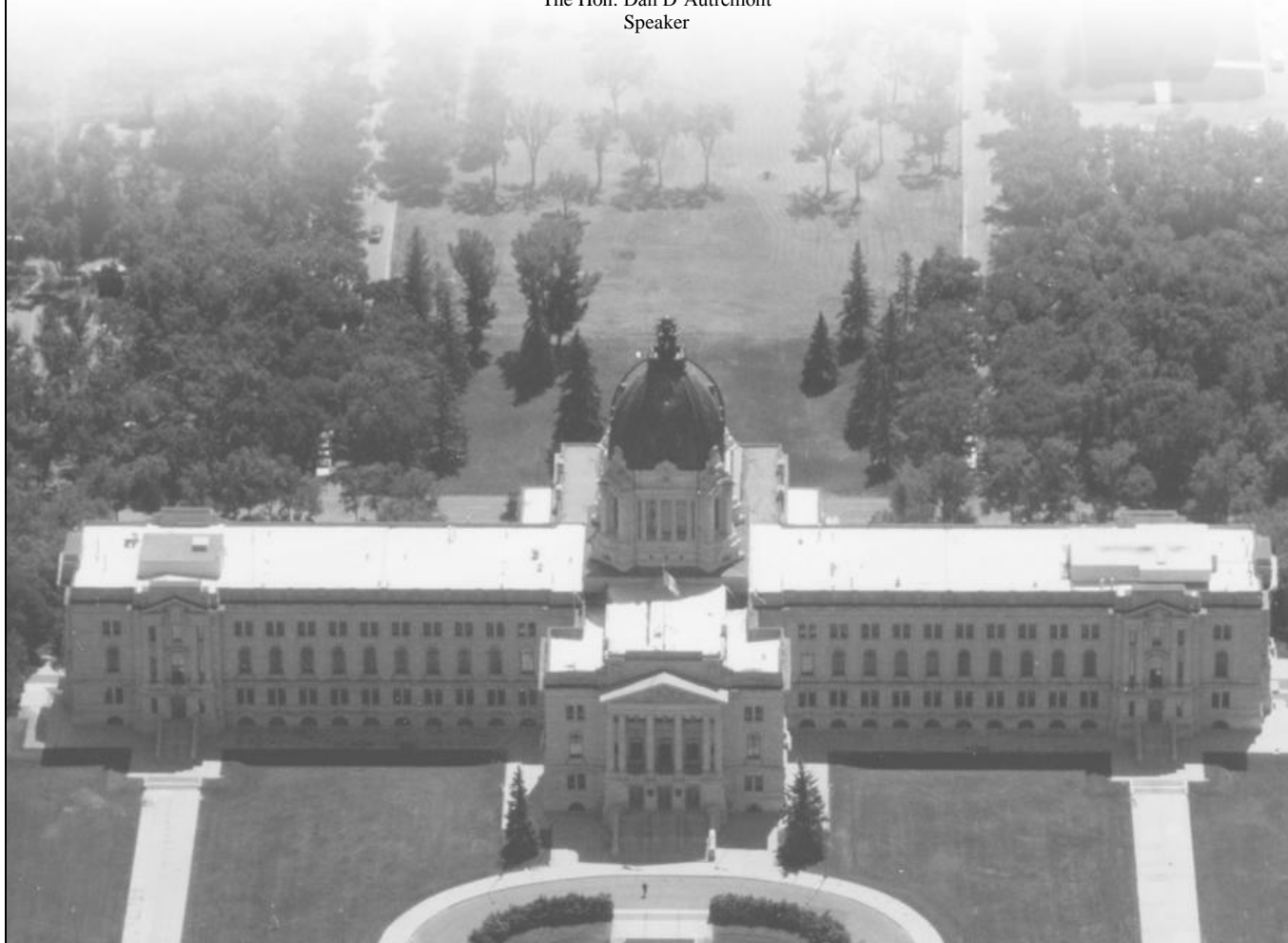
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. 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, 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, Hon. 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, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, 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, Hon. 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, Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. 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, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of this Legislative Assembly, I introduce a fine group of two grade 10 classes in the west gallery accompanied by teacher Perry Ostapowich and Mr. Scott Wallis.

These students are again students of Mr. Ostapowich's, and I just want to thank Perry for bringing these students year after year to the Legislative Assembly. The work that he does in his class to engage them in the provincial legislative system is truly commendable, and he's just been a great person to be doing that.

Along with these people there's some . . . I'd like to mention a couple specific, Mr. Speaker. They're all a great bunch of kids and quite a few of them I do know. Two I want to point out. One is Kayla Perkins. Kayla, you want to wave? I've known Kayla for quite a while since she moved to Yorkton. Her mom and dad actually took over our old business in Yorkton and she's quite an accomplished singer. She actually won the same competition, the GX Junior Star Search that my daughter, youngest daughter won a number of years back. And she's very talented and I welcome her to her Assembly.

Along with her is Gabrielle Thomson who is the daughter of, again, good friends of ours, the youth pastors of Prairie Harvest Christian Life Centre. Gabrielle, give us a wave. And again, great family, great friends, and Gabrielle's just a fine young lady. I'm happy to welcome her to this Legislative Assembly. So I ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this morning while we were, I was still in Swift Current, I received a tweet from one of the classmates that have joined us in the gallery there. It reads as follows: "@PremierBradWall Hello again . . . can you introduce me in the legislature #please and thank you."

So to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce Clyde Mariano seated in the gallery there and welcome him to his Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to stand today and introduce someone who is a great leader in my constituency, and that would be the mayor of Humboldt, Malcolm Eaton. Malcolm works tirelessly and he thought he might be able to retire this last round of elections but the city of Humboldt was having none of it. And so we're great

to have him back in the leadership role for the city of Humboldt. So I want everyone to join me in welcoming Malcolm to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the minister in welcoming Mayor Eaton to his legislature. I know he plays a huge role in Humboldt and right across the province bringing fresh, new ideas to the urban issues that face people right in our province. So on behalf of the opposition, I join the minister in welcoming him to our legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly, I'd like to join with the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation and the member opposite in welcoming Mayor Eaton to the Assembly.

Mayor Eaton is not only the mayor of the great community of Humboldt, but he is also currently the Acting Chair of the city mayors' caucus, a part of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association or SUMA. Had an opportunity to chat with him earlier. I thank him for all the good work he's been doing and I look forward to a great relationship with him down the road. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, seated in your gallery we have a number of guests who are here this afternoon and who will be joining us for an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] reception after the proceedings end this afternoon. And hopefully there's a good turnout among members of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of guests from the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, and I would be pleased to introduce them: Diane Lemon, the president of the society; Therese Jelinski who's a board member; as well as other board members, Dr. Marla Davidson, Fiona Adams, Ken Rasmussen; a family caregiver, Edna Parrott; Joanne Michael, the program service manager for the Alzheimer Society; as well as Joanne Bracken, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Alzheimer Society. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming the individuals from the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan. Thank you so much for being here. To Diane Lemon, president of the board, thank you for being here as well as Joanne Bracken, CEO. And to all of the board members and family members, we're so happy that you're here today, and thank you for the work that you do throughout the year for many Saskatchewan families here in the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to introduce someone that's very special in my life. Seated in your gallery is my sister and my friend, Edna Irwin. And Edna's making her sessional visit to this Chamber so she is really no stranger. But I think the Minister of Finance put it very well when he said it looks like there's going to be a lot of PST [provincial sales tax] dollars in the government coffers after we do a little bit of shopping up here. So I would like everyone to join me in welcoming Edna to her Legislative Chamber.

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce a constituent of mine, Ms. Barb Butler. I met Barb a few years ago when she invited me to the Positive Steps Walkathon which is hosted by the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association. This association began in 1985 and helps individuals and families deal with the effects of traumatic or acquired brain injury. Barb herself is a survivor, and over the years has donated selflessly to this worthwhile cause. She also serves as vice-president of Brain Injury Association of Canada.

Something that has been on Barb's bucket list for a while now has been to meet the Premier. She will have the honour of meeting him today following question period. I would like all members to join me in welcoming Barb to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to offer two sets of introductions. First and foremost we have some distinguished guests that are joining us, and I'd like to introduce Mr. Rajat Nag, a two-time graduate from the University of Saskatchewan in engineering and business, and who is now the managing director general of the Asian Development Bank. He's joined by his colleague Mr. Das Narayanan who is with the department of external relations for the Asian Development Bank.

As well they're joined by Len Edwards, no stranger to this province. Len is originally from Melfort. He is a strategic adviser for Gowlings. He is a former deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, former deputy minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, former deputy minister of International Trade, and former ambassador to South Korea and Japan. And they're also joined by Dr. Douglas Goold, who is a director with the Asia Pacific Foundation. Mr. Speaker, these individuals today have met with the Premier and work tirelessly to ensure that Canada and Saskatchewan continue to be connected to the Asia Pacific region and well beyond. And so I'd ask all members to welcome them to their legislature.

Mr. Speaker, if I could, just briefly and importantly, I'd also like to introduce . . . Pardon me. First I'll catch the pass. I'd like

to introduce Anne Fitzgerald, the chief legal officer for Cineplex, and with her is someone who needs no introduction in this House, Mr. Doug Richardson. Both have worked tirelessly to ensure that Saskatchewan continues to be a site of investment and interest and activity for Cineplex and many other entities. So to both of those individuals, I'd ask all members to help me welcome them to the legislature of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, just very quickly to add to the hon. member's welcome of our guests from ADB, from the Asian Development Bank. We did have a great meeting this morning. We also welcome Mr. Goold from the Asia Pacific Foundation and Mr. Edwards.

This is an area of the world that's very important for Saskatchewan, increasingly important as we seek to diversify our export interests away from too much of a dependence on our friends to the south. And we welcome their counsel and advice as we try to do this, Mr. Speaker. So I join with the member in welcoming these gentlemen to the Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — At this time I would like to take the opportunity to introduce guests that we have sitting behind the bar and in the gallery from the Midwest Legislative Council Exchange, which is an exchange between Saskatchewan and US [United States] Midwest jurisdictions.

Seated on the floor behind the bar, we have Senator Mike Vehle of South Dakota. He also has some family connections into the Saskatoon area. We have Senator John Nelson of Nebraska, who had an aunt and uncle living at Drinkwater; Senator Ed Charbonneau of Indiana, whose father was born at Simpson; and Representative Deborah Berry of Iowa, and she's looking for someone to adopt her from Saskatchewan.

Seated up in the Speaker's gallery we have Mrs. John Nelson; Mr. Brian Herman from the Canadian consulate in Chicago; Mr. Brian Shipley, Canadian consulate in Minneapolis; and Ms. Ilene Grossman, assistant director, Council of State Governments for the Midwest. Welcome to the Saskatchewan legislature.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to introduce, seated in the Speaker's gallery, 20 grade 10 students from the Gordon F. Kells High School in Carlyle, in the best constituency in Saskatchewan. Accompanying them are teachers Bryce Birch, Audra Reeves, chaperones Christina Canart and Dan Reeves. I would ask that you welcome them to the legislature as well.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand today to present a petition on cell service. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Undertake, as soon as possible, to ensure SaskTel delivers cellular service to the Canoe Lake First Nation, along with

the adjoining communities of Cole Bay and Jans Bay; Buffalo River First Nation, also known as Dillon, and the neighbouring communities of Michel Village and St. George's Hill; English River First Nations, also known as Patuanak, and the hamlet of Patuanak; and Birch Narrows First Nations along with the community of Turnor Lake, including all the neighbouring communities in each of those areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are primarily from Dillon but they also have petitions signed from all the other communities in the area. And I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to petition on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to our provincial finances. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party government to provide Saskatchewan people with 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 sustainable, responsible, 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 LeRoy, Saskatoon, and Yorkton. I so submit.

[13:45]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

A Beacon of Hope

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, several years ago, our former Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, wrote about her mother's experience with Alzheimer's disease. I remember being deeply moved by her words. She wrote:

My mother became my sick child, my dependent child facing an irreversible countdown.

Everything faded away and was lost: her ability to read, her ability to walk, her mastery of language, her memory of my name, her memory of who I was.

Mr. Speaker, those are moving words about a deeply heart-wrenching experience of a very long and very slow goodbye to a precious loved one. And for thousands of

Saskatchewan families, those words hit very close to home.

For all of those families, Mr. Speaker, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is a much needed beacon of hope. The society offers both help for today in the form of support and education for those with dementia and their caregivers, and the society offers hope for tomorrow by searching for the cause and the cure, including support for existing research that is happening at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in expressing our sincere gratitude to the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan for their vital contribution to our province. Thank you.

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

Christmas Kettle Campaign

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's that time of year again. The holiday season is upon us. Christmas is beginning to show its colours. Carols are playing throughout the city, and the familiar sound of the Salvation Army kettle campaign is ringing throughout the city.

This past Saturday I had the opportunity of manning a Christmas kettle in my constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. I had the pleasure of visiting with many Regina residents as they stopped by to generously donate to such a worthwhile cause. Mr. Speaker, Canada's first kettle was used in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1906. Today the familiar kettles are seen in more than 200 locations nationwide. Mr. Speaker, the kettles are set up in 14 different malls and stores around Regina to raise money for those less fortunate. Kettle locations include all the major malls, liquor stores, and large retail stores.

In 2011 the Salvation Army was able to raise 180,000 in Regina. Mr. Speaker, this year the Salvation Army hopes to raise over 200,000 for those who are less fortunate. I am positive that the Saskatchewan spirit of generosity will have no problem in passing this goal.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members, if they see a kettle, please don't hesitate to donate. It doesn't matter how large or how small; everything helps for people who are less fortunate to have a wonderful Christmas. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

St. Andrew's College Centennial

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer St. Andrew's College at the University of Saskatchewan celebrated its centennial with renewed faith and a vision for the next century.

Founded in 1912, the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon was proclaimed by an Act of the Saskatchewan legislature in 1913. First located in a large family home on Albert Avenue, the college began its academic training in the fall of 1914 with an enrolment of 37 students. With the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925,

Presbyterian Theological College was renamed St. Andrew's College in honour of its Presbyterian founders, the discipleship of Andrew, and the commitment to the newly formed Canadian church.

Mr. Speaker, the current principal and former premier, Reverend Lorne Calvert, says St. Andrew's has graduated 635 students over the years. These students were all invited back to the celebration weekend in July that included a gala banquet and tours of the college and the old barn.

Mr. Calvert says in many ways the college is still the same as it was in 1912. I quote:

From the beginning, the college has believed in the integration of theological studies with all other areas of study. We believe theological study should be done in the context of other disciplines and in the context of the world. That has always been the ethos of St. Andrew's: To prepare people for ministry but in the context of society and the world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating St. Andrew's College on their 100th year. Thank you.

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

Phones for a Fresh Start Program

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to commend an outstanding charitable initiative by one of Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. SaskTel's Phones for a Fresh Start program, through a partnership with the provincial association of house and services of Saskatchewan, helps victims of domestic abuse by providing phones and prepaid phone cards to 19 Saskatchewan women's shelters.

Mr. Speaker, often women who flee to shelters leave their abusive situation with nothing. Having a cellphone can provide them with a way to keep in touch with family and friends as well as a valuable asset in an emergency situation. They can also use it once they leave the shelter to help them get established again.

Mr. Speaker, the Phones for a Fresh Start program will accept any type of hand-held wireless device regardless of whether they are working or not. The phones are then refurbished and donated to the Provincial Association of Transition Houses. If the phone is unable to be repaired, it is then recycled. The funds raised from recycling these phones will go towards the purchase of prepaid phone cards for PATHS [Provincial Association of Transition Houses Saskatchewan].

Mr. Speaker, to date there have been over 35,000 phones recycled. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking SaskTel and the Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan for this outstanding community partnership. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

New Affordable Housing in Prince Albert

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in the House to talk about a new affordable housing development that opened in Prince Albert on November 23rd. This four-unit development will provide much needed housing in this community for seniors caring for dependants.

Mr. Speaker, our government, through Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, is proud to partner with Prince Albert Community Housing Society Inc. to make this project happen. The total cost of these homes is estimated at \$744,000. Of that amount, I'm pleased to announce that SHC [Saskatchewan Housing Corporation] contributed \$520,500 to this project. The remaining funds were provided by P.A. [Prince Albert] Community Housing.

Mr. Speaker, it is heartwarming to have so many people come together to help more Prince Albert seniors find housing that they can afford. This initiative is a fine example of our shared commitment to putting people first and helping them to secure their futures through affordable housing. I am pleased to note that since November '07, our government has assisted in the development of 132 affordable rental units in Prince Albert, including 26 units for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in commending Prince Albert Community Housing for joining with us to take action on the need for additional rental housing to accommodate seniors and their dependants. Now four more families have a safe, quality place to call home. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Fighting Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to bring awareness to a disease that impacted many families throughout Saskatchewan. Alzheimer's disease is a fatal and progressive degenerative disease that destroys brain cells. It is the most common form of dementia, accounting for 64 per cent of all dementias in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Symptoms include having difficulty remembering, making decisions, and performing everyday activities. These changes can affect the way a person feels and acts. There's currently no way to stop the disease, but research is improving the way we provide care. With a growing number of seniors in the province that already has a significant older population, our government recognizes the importance of providing support to those dealing with Alzheimer's disease. A good example of this is the First Link program.

This program is a referral system designed to directly link individuals who are newly diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and their families with the Alzheimer Society for services and support at the time of diagnosis and throughout the duration of the disease. It is a great joint effort among health care providers, the Alzheimer Society, patients, and family members. This program ensures better quality care and enhances a quality of life for those diagnosed with the disease.

Mr. Speaker, the Alzheimer Society is here today, and I ask all members to join me in thanking them for their contributions in the fight against Alzheimer's.

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

University-Industry Research Partnership Celebrated

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 16th I had the opportunity to attend a significant event at the University of Saskatchewan College of Engineering. This event celebrated a university-industry research partnership featuring Venmar CES Inc. and the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] College of Engineering. Venmar CES specializes in the commercial air-to-air energy recovery ventilation. Their products aim to protect the environment and lower costs in HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] systems.

Mr. Speaker, the company was started by a U of S researcher, Robert Besant, in the 1970s. They are leaders in the industry, Mr. Speaker. They continue to pioneer new technology and innovations here and around the world. This local company has been involved with the construction of what will be the tallest building in the western hemisphere — One World Trade Centre. Because of their drive to raise the bar on innovation, Mr. Speaker, they are participating in this internationally renowned project. This is a prime example of a Saskatchewan success story, Mr. Speaker.

This type of university-private research sector collaboration benefits students and the company alike. To date Venmar CES has helped fund 20 U of S master's and Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] student projects. Research done by the engineering students will help shape the future of how buildings worldwide are heated and cooled.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Venmar CES and the College of Engineering as they continue their partnership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

State of Provincial Finances

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we've heard optimistic budget predictions from this government before. The sad reality though has been deficit — three consecutive years verified by our Provincial Auditor.

The Sask Party has lots of spin and PR [public relations], but its words don't match the budgetary reality. Clearly this budget's off track, confirmed in today's mid-year report: a debt increase of more than \$1 billion in this year alone; a \$50 million draw from the rainy day fund, our savings, with another \$150 million to be drained next year planned already, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why at this time of prosperity is the Sask Party increasing debt and draining our savings?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to present the update to the Saskatchewan financial picture this morning, Mr. Speaker. The mid-year was presented early this morning, Mr. Speaker, and it shows something that the NDP [New Democratic Party] would not understand. It shows that we have a balanced budget in the General Revenue Fund. It shows that we have a balanced budget on the summary financial basis, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province of Saskatchewan understand full well that this budget is a balanced budget. It is one where revenue exceeds expenditures, and it will remain that way, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, a word that sums up this mid-year statement is deferral. The Sask Party is punting school projects in education instead of investing and building the schools and repairing the schools that we need.

They're punting projects in the Crown sector, over \$200 million, instead of investing to make the improvements needed for families and in our growing communities, all of this to paint a picture that supports that public relations line. And the deferrals, the punting of projects, were only identified in the technical briefings instead of that government being straight with the public.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the schools and infrastructure we need, how does punting needed and planned projects to next year do anything other than defer reporting a financial problem for next year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On budget day we said we would have a balanced budget. Today we have a balanced budget. On budget day we said our economy would be leading the nation. Today our economy is leading the nation. We said Saskatchewan would continue to grow. Today Saskatchewan continues to grow.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately some forecasts are not quite so accurate, like the NDP forecasts of gloom and doom. That member forecast a deficit. Wrong. That member forecast our economy going in the tank, Mr. Speaker. Wrong. That member forecast huge program cuts. Wrong.

Mr. Speaker, the economy is strong. The budget is balanced. The province is on the right track, despite all the NDP's predictions of gloom and doom.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, actions of government speak louder than words, and in the case of that minister, that's difficult. And this government is scrambling, making short-sighted decisions and sell-offs. It's punting needed

projects to next year. It's selling off assets like ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan], land, and affordable homes. It's draining millions from our savings. It's putting the public at risk with a costly privatized approach to our infrastructure. It's making cuts in health, education, and more.

With such a time of opportunity in this province with all of our natural resources and our growing population, why is the Sask Party deferring schools and infrastructure, cutting services, selling off assets, draining savings, and racking up debt? It doesn't make any sense at all.

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Before that member starts to look at something else, he should look at what goes on within his own campaign budget, Mr. Speaker. And it's not just the Saskatchewan Party who says that that member's numbers don't add up. Here's what NDP candidate Erin Weir said on October the 18th, *Leader-Post*. And I quote, Mr. Speaker:

Wotherspoon's policy is a "wish list with no indications of how much any of it would cost or how to pay for it." Wotherspoon admitted that.

Only the NDP would have a Finance critic who can't cost out his own campaign platform, can't balance his own budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan budget is balanced. It's balanced on the General Revenue Fund side. It's balanced on the summary side. This is good news for Saskatchewan, and the only people who don't seem to get it are the NDP.

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

Support for Dementia Patients and Their Caregivers

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the recent Taking the Pulse survey conducted by the University of Saskatchewan and the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation], nearly 44 per cent of Saskatchewan people identified dementia such as Alzheimer's disease as a problem within their own family. That's a huge proportion of our population that is directly affected by this disease.

My question to the Minister of Health is this: does he agree with me that Alzheimer's disease and related dementia ought to be a key priority for the provincial government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly this is a significant issue that is in our province, Mr. Speaker. We know that roughly 18,000 people in Saskatchewan have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or other related dementias. We know that this has a significant, takes a significant toll, not only on their life but also their family life, Mr. Speaker. And we also know that, the way the trends are going, that by 2030 the number of people that will be diagnosed

with Alzheimer's and other related dementias will be double what it is today when you look at those that are diagnosed on a yearly basis.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the good work of the Saskatchewan Alzheimer Society. I look forward to continuing our working relationship that we have between the Ministry of Health and the Alzheimer Society. And, Mr. Speaker, I suspect there'll be a follow-up question. Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that the minister sees this as a priority. Let's look at some of the dollar figures from province to province. Manitoba provides about \$210,000 per year to their Alzheimer Society. British Columbia provides \$1 million per year and Alberta provides nearly \$1.4 million per year. Yet despite the fact that the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan provides crucial support to those affected by dementia, they receive just \$50,000 in government funding. That's 3.5 per cent of what the Alberta society receives.

My question to the Minister of Health is this: does he agree with me that \$50,000 in funding is not nearly enough for an organization that provides such vital services to Saskatchewan families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I and this government recognizes the good work of the Saskatchewan Alzheimer Society with the funding that they are allocated by the provincial government. We know that the First Link program has done significant work to enhance the quality of life for those that suffer from Alzheimer's and related dementias, Mr. Speaker. It helps to build those, bridge those gaps in terms of providing that referrals and that assistance that people and their families who suffer from this disease, Mr. Speaker.

And we do know, Mr. Speaker, and I acknowledge that the Alzheimer Society has put forward a proposal that would see an expansion of this program. Of course that will be taken in consideration with all of the competing priorities of our budget, our budget discussions, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to that furthering that work.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dementia has a horrendous effect on caregivers: 75 per cent of caregivers, the majority of whom are seniors themselves, develop psychological illness as a result of the challenges of caring for their loved ones. These caregivers desperately need support. One program that is helping is the First Link program as mentioned by the member in a member's statement and the minister in his response.

The First Link program is so effective and so well-used, Mr. Speaker, that the Canadian Consensus guidelines on dementia,

developed by 45 medical experts, recommend that primary care providers refer patients and their families to the Alzheimer Society immediately following a diagnosis of dementia. We know that the First Link program is a good response by the society but, Mr. Speaker, the \$50,000 is not an adequate amount to fund the program. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not surprising to me, hearing the good stories about the First Link program. I recall recently speaking with a woman, Mr. Speaker, who lost her loved one, and she said that the program was an absolutely essential lifeline for her.

My question to the minister: if the program is good, if government commitment to it is not adequate, will the ministry be providing more funding for the First Link program?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, we certainly know that this is a program that has been well-received, Mr. Speaker, and one that is seen as being a significant benefit to those who suffer from Alzheimer's as well as their families. Mr. Speaker, that's why after the initial, I believe, three-year agreement approximately five years ago completed, there was additional money in the following year budget. But, Mr. Speaker, that funding was made . . . It was annualized in the 2010 budget as ongoing funding within our ministry budget.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, this is something that we will consider in the work that needs to take place in discussing and finalizing a budget for the 2013 year, Mr. Speaker. And certainly we will take into consideration the proposal that's been put forward by the Alzheimer Society in seeking additional funding to not only enhance the service that is currently provided but also in seeking to expand the service beyond the existing regions that it currently serves. And we'll continue with that work, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've discussed in question period before and in committee with the previous minister, providing supports for caregivers to care for their loved ones who are suffering from Alzheimer's makes sense. It makes sense from a perspective of compassion but also makes sense for the health care system. We know, Mr. Speaker, when people have the proper supports, we're able to keep loved ones out of care facilities on average 557 days longer than those who do not have the adequate supports. So we know that this program makes sense, Mr. Speaker, and we know that it certainly needs more funding than the \$50,000 that it is currently receiving.

Mr. Speaker, these supports are vital for people who are caring for their loved ones in their homes in order that people can have a higher quality of life. My specific question to the minister: in the 2013-14 budget, does he firmly commit, Mr. Speaker, to increase the amount of funding for the First Link program so that the Alzheimer Society can do the good work that it does in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for this question. Certainly, as I have indicated in my previous answers, the proposal that has been put forward by the Alzheimer Society is part of the consideration that will take place for our budget. I certainly wouldn't want to write the Finance minister's budget here on the floor of the Assembly four months early, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, we support and honour the good work that is being done by the Alzheimer Society. I've had the opportunity to meet, early on in my tenure as Minister of Health, with the Alzheimer Society to get an understanding of not just the First Link program but some of the research that's being done around this field. I've had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, as well as many people in this province have had a family member who has suffered from Alzheimer's and have heard first-hand the toll that it takes on a family and on that individual, Mr. Speaker. And so while I will not be committing today to an additional increase, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly something that we'll consider in the context of the 2013-14 budget deliberations.

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

Changes to Labour Legislation

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been two weeks since the Minister of Labour told a paid luncheon audience of friends what's in his massive overhaul to our labour laws. People were surprised about what he talked about because they weren't the ideas that the Sask Party campaigned on, and they certainly weren't the things that people voted for. Now people are still left waiting as to when they'll hear about the bill, and they're wondering if they should have bought a lunch ticket because that's the only way the Sask Party lets the province know what it's doing these days.

Mr. Speaker, after a summer of no public consultations, many people are wondering what exactly the minister's planned because his first leaks of the bill to his friendly crowd weren't reflective of the needs of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, there's only six more sitting days of this session. When is the minister going to table the massive overhaul to Saskatchewan labour laws?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We've talked about this piece of legislation as we've gone through the summer months. There was over 3,800 responses to the call for consultation. A lot of those papers were very substantive and detailed. And we've taken those, we've incorporated them. And, Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member opposite that it will not be long and there will be a bill being introduced. We've indicated it was going to be introduced this session. That in fact is going to take place.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that he was the one that said:

In May when we saw this [this is a direct quote] coming forward there didn't seem to be a reason why this was coming forward. That was the big gap in this. There was

no common sense reason for this.

But the NDP's submission said exactly the opposite:

Governments should always be ready to improve labour legislation. That readiness is an important part of a common sense commitment to a better future for the province.

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

Mr. Forbes: — I always appreciate being quoted in the House here, Mr. Speaker. The minister has told the reporters he's working his staff on overtime to get the bill complete. After he spilled the beans to his paying audience on the bill, he showed that respect for workers and fairness and overtime hours could be a thing of the past. And that's the opposite of progressive labour legislation that this province needs, and it tips the balance away from working people and erases the 40-hour work week with 8-hour work days as we now know it.

Mr. Speaker, these policies deserve to see the light of day for they certainly weren't what the people voted for in the last election. Mr. Speaker, why did the minister reveal these controversial changes to a paid luncheon instead of defending them in the public eye?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've raised these issues in a variety of different formats and forums including the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, including the minister's advisory committee which includes the president of the SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] and executive members from CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees]. Mr. Speaker, we've gone through an extensive consultation.

We think that we've got a bill that's going to address a lot of concerns that are there. Mr. Speaker, we have in the past had a very good relationship with labour in the province. And I want to quote the Leader of the Opposition, who said in a October 23 scrum: "Our economy has been moving along quite well with relative labour peace for many, many years."

Mr. Speaker, we want to continue that. Even the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged the labour peace we've had. When we brought in essential services, they said it would end collective bargaining as we know it. Well it didn't. When we brought in secret ballots and freedom of speech, they said it was an attack on unionization. Well it didn't change the world, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, one of Justice Ball's requirements in the last time the Sask Party's labour legislation was thrown out and declared unconstitutional was for this government to hold actual consultations, real public consultations with the real . . . with people when it comes to labour law. But now his government's laws are sitting before the courts once again. And the minister says he's already drafting essential services language into this new massive overhaul of labour legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the courts have already ruled on the last time the Sask Party passed essential services legislation. And the Justice was quite clear that the Sask Party's one-sided approach was one of the key reasons their legislation was completely unconstitutional.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why would the Sask Party ram ahead with the new massive labour law overhaul without public consultation? And why won't he bring this bill to the legislature for us to debate?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments that we made to the people of this province was that we would have essential services legislation in our province. We want to ensure that when there's a blizzard or unfavourable weather that highways get cleared. We want to make sure that when operating rooms continue to operate during periods of labour strife that we are able to continue to provide those services. That's a commitment that we made, Mr. Speaker, and that is a commitment we intend to keep.

Mr. Speaker, I can add as well, we value and respect the contribution and hard work that the women and men in our province make. We want to ensure that this piece of legislation respects and values that. And, Mr. Speaker, to the people in our province we want to say that this piece of legislation will protect and enshrine the rights that they have.

Mr. Speaker, neither members on this side of the House or on that side . . . [inaudible] . . . ought to be commenting on something that's before the courts as we speak.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

[14:15]

Prince Albert Bridge

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Highways spent more time backpedalling and spinning and spinning than finding a solution for the P.A. bridge. In question period the minister said, ". . . our government is fully behind those repairs even though they weren't originally our responsibility."

That's very strange, Mr. Speaker, because right after the last election the former minister said very clearly in a press release, and I quote, "The province will fund 100 per cent of the cost to repair the Diefenbaker bridge."

Mr. Speaker, a report in 2010 showed exactly how much funding was needed to repair that bridge to a safe standard. So my question to the minister: did the minister fund all of the repairs identified in the 2010 report as critical for the safety and security of the Diefenbaker bridge in P.A.?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you look

back at the history of the Diefenbaker bridge, how it was constructed and the agreements that were put in place, the provincial government at that time, many, many years ago, picked up the cost of the bridge with the city or the municipality being responsible for any repairs moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, fast forward many decades to where we are now. That responsibility still should be with the city, but we realize that there were major structural deficiencies with that bridge. That's why our government, in the repairs that are going on right now, are picking up 100 per cent of the cost, as the minister said. Not that it was our responsibility, but we also realized the situation. And we put over 4 million — and I quoted last week, I believe, it was 3 million — it's over \$4 million, Mr. Speaker. And I would say to the member opposite that as you are doing repairs on the bridge, we found some more structural damage. That's why the cost has gone up from \$3 million to \$4 million.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're covering 100 per cent of the repairs, which is unlike the NDP that covered a portion of it and then put the rest of the responsibility back on Prince Albert taxpayers.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the costs aren't between 3 and \$4 million. We know that the full costs of all the bills identified in 2010 were an additional \$7 million, not the \$3 million that the minister is bragging about. And that study found that the repairs needed . . . before the additional support beam repairs were needed, Mr. Speaker, the city said there are more, there's more work that is needed to fix the bridge. And last year's agreement shows that that cost should be covered by the Sask Party government at 100 per cent.

The Prince Albert people should not be stuck hoping and praying that the bridge doesn't take on more damage, thereby compromising safety. But the Sask Party won't do all the work that is needed and they won't even talk about a second bridge.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister get with the program and fully fund all the repairs that the city says are needed?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that a report said that there are other issues, Mr. Speaker, but not emergency issues, not structural issues, Mr. Speaker, with the bridge. Mr. Speaker, the city can apply to the urban connector's program that's available for other communities for highway infrastructure that passes through their community, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government is picking up \$4.2 million. This bridge will be structurally sound, moving into the future. The member opposite says they're not even talking about a second bridge. Mr. Speaker, when he was the minister of Highways, Mr. Speaker, he so poorly funded the highway infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, it's taken five years of over \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker, and we still have more work to do because of the deficiencies from that minister himself.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the people of P.A. need answers, not spin. The city council, the RMs [rural municipality], the chamber of commerce, and people from all over the Prince Albert area know the importance of building a second bridge. The P.A. economy has grown. The population in the North is also growing, Mr. Speaker, but the second bridge is nowhere to be seen from the Sask Party. And, Mr. Speaker, the question that we're going to ask in the Assembly is to ask the minister for once to answer the response from his perspective as a Sask Party member.

Is the Sask Party not building that bridge in Prince Albert because they're broke, or because they are simply turning their backs on the great city of Prince Albert? Which is it, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the two MLAs sitting on this side in government, Mr. Speaker, as well as other MLAs around the Prince Albert area, have done more to raise issues in that Prince Albert area, Mr. Speaker, and the infrastructure than that member ever did as a northern member for the NDP when they were in government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is a report being done, Mr. Speaker. There is a report being finalized that we hope will be released in the near future. The parties that are part of that report are finalizing the report so that it will be introduced into the future, Mr. Speaker. But what I would say is that when you look at the demands of infrastructure around the province in a growing province, which the NDP never did experience for 16 years, a growing province of over 80,000 more people in this province in the last five years, you look at some of the infrastructure in Saskatoon, some of the infrastructure around our major cities — Regina — there is need. Certainly there is, Mr. Speaker.

Some of our bridges are carrying up to 80,000 vehicles a day compared to the Diefenbaker bridge at 200. We need to prioritize all those responsibilities and move whatever bridge hits number one forward, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell you that the response for Prince Albert will be much greater under this government than under those members previous.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, it is my pleasure to submit supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — Would you please rise for a message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits Supplementary Estimates — November of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March

31st, 2013 and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. The Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

You may be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 73 — *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Mr. Speaker, this Act provides the legislative framework through which Saskatchewan's towns, villages, resort villages, and rural municipalities exercise their powers and provide services. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012* which refines and updates the legislation to ensure it continues to meet both the province's and the municipal sector's needs.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will serve to strengthen the legislation. The proposed amendments support the intention of the legislation to grant municipalities not only greater flexibility, but also greater accountability in dealing with local matters.

Many of the amendments will also help to ensure consistency of intent among the three municipal Acts. Mr. Speaker, although many of the amendments in this draft bill are the same as those proposed for *The Cities Act* and *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2012*, it's appropriate for me to highlight the more significant changes that the bill proposes, particularly in the context of smaller urban and rural municipalities in the southern part of the province to which this bill applies.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this draft bill serve the following purposes. First, they will improve processes related to the boundary alterations or annexations for the municipalities involved for the Saskatchewan Municipal Board and to support government's growth strategy. Second, they respond to specific requests from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. Third, they support the intent of agreements such as the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade in areas such as business licensing and municipal procurement. And finally, they address other requests from across the municipal sector to clarify wording and improve consistency among the municipal Acts regarding primarily administrative matters and make other changes identified by the ministry to clarify areas such as education property tax reporting, licence fees, and purchasing policies.

Mr. Speaker, I will expand briefly on the amendments in each of these areas. First, the amendments related to the process for boundary alterations in *The Municipalities Act* include the

following: a new time limit on how long a municipality must wait for response to a proposed annexation application from the other affected municipality before the process is considered disputed and can proceed to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board; requiring mediation before the SMB [Saskatchewan Municipal Board] hears and decides an application for annexation on which the affected municipal councils cannot reach agreement; providing clear authority for the approval of a portion or parts of an application by the board, for example, the portions on which agreement has been reached among the councils; making the ban on similar applications going to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board consistent among the three municipal Acts at one year; and clarifying that an application may be amended or withdrawn at any time up until the board completes its review, after which the board's decision shall apply.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments I just mentioned are consistent with amendments proposed to all three municipal Acts and the Saskatchewan Municipal Board Act this session that we believe will improve and expedite the boundary alteration process. Again, government encourages municipalities to work co-operatively to resolve differences and to plan for and support the growth and development occurring in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the second main area of amendments in this bill responds to specific requests from the municipal associations.

The first request relates to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and the authority for RMs to establish additional service areas. Many rural municipalities are seeing the development of areas that require more urban-type services which are different than the typical agricultural areas. Residential developments are more common now throughout RMs, as people wish to relocate to an acreage or a pocket of developed lots. Presently the ratepayers throughout the RM may be paying for services in these residential developments that most of the RM ratepayers do not access or require.

Mr. Speaker, legislation currently provides for areas to be taxed and serviced at different levels only when municipalities restructure. RMs have expressed an interest in having the authority to develop an additional service area or areas at other times. An additional service area would be a defined geographic area established in the RM that would provide residents living in that defined area with incremental services that they require but are not needed in the rest of the RM. This new authority would allow the municipality to fund and deliver such services that are needed or requested by residents within these geographic areas.

I'd like to point out that the proposed provisions related to additional service areas also establish important safeguards within the legislation. For example, additional service areas cannot be established to specifically target an individual, residential, commercial, industrial, or agricultural property or be specific to a business or business activity.

The second specific request relates to SUMA and involves greater flexibility to address issues related to municipal debt limits. Mr. Speaker, current provisions related to municipal debt limits were requested at the time *The Municipalities Act* was developed. That said, given the growth and development that is

occurring in Saskatchewan, issues with respect to municipal debt limits may have changed. The ministry is aware of the discussions that SUMA has initiated within the sector as to what constitutes own-source revenue as it relates to determining a municipality's debt limit. As a result, amendments are proposed to ensure authority to define own-source revenues and regulation for municipal debt limit purposes and establish alternate procedures for determining a municipality's debt limit. This flexibility will be helpful in implementing the outcome of discussions among SUMA, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, and others in the sector to address issues related to borrowing, debt limits, and borrowing approvals.

Mr. Speaker, the next category of amendments includes enabling municipalities to establish and enter into the voluntary intermunicipal business licensing arrangements and the common issuance of overweight vehicle permits with other municipalities. The amendment enabling intermunicipal business licensing will provide municipalities with discretionary authority to recognize business licences, permits, and approvals issued by other municipalities, including those in other jurisdictions. The amendment supports the province's commitments under interprovincial, national, and international agreements such as the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade. This will encourage municipalities to reconcile their various business licensing regimes. They are voluntary provisions and ensure that municipalities have the legislative authority to agree on such regimes.

[14:30]

Amendments related to overweight permits clarify the ability for municipalities to voluntarily develop a system that allows for the common issuance of overweight permits. Amendments will provide municipalities with the authority to enter into an agreement that would allow for an overweight permit issued by one of the municipalities that is part of the agreement to be recognized in the other municipalities that are involved in that agreement. Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments are in response to the efforts of government to remove barriers impeding economic growth.

The last main area of amendments addresses other requests of stakeholders to clarify certain administrative matters such as the signing of council meeting minutes, consistent terminology regarding service or filing of assessment appeal notices, and adding contact information for appellant agents to assessment appeal notices. These were initially requested by the cities as proposed amendments to *The Cities Act*. To ensure consistency among the municipal Acts, these amendments are also included in this bill and also *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*.

My ministry also identified amendments to clarify certain provisions, for example, those regarding education property tax reporting. These reports will now go to Government Relations instead of the Ministry of Education. As well, other amendments clarify that fees for issuing a permit, inspection, or approval not exceed the cost of administration and enforcement, similar to the present situation regarding licence fees.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry has consulted extensively on these

amendments with municipalities individually as well as with SARM, SUMA, and both municipal administrators' associations. In addition, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and individual resource companies were consulted on a number of their proposals, for example, relating to the common issuance of overweight permits and the establishment of additional service areas. These consultations began in mid-February 2012 and concluded at the end of August and involved sharing draft side-by-sides of all the amendments for review and comment. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals who took the time to provide input, advice, and feedback.

In conclusion, the amendments to *The Municipalities Act* address issues identified by the municipal sector, the ministry, and others to improve and streamline processes. They encourage and support intermunicipal co-operation, consultation, and forward-looking planning. We feel the amendments will assist in meeting the needs of municipalities, the public, and businesses to support the continued growth of the province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to first of all thank the minister for some of the notes that he's forwarded to me on Bill 73. We obviously have to go through this fairly thick document to really understand some of the processes that he wants to implement as a result of this bill. But more so, Mr. Speaker, we want to take our perspective as well, as the official opposition, on Bill 73. I think the people out there in Saskatchewanland should know that we take the role of being the official opposition very seriously in the sense that it's important that we go through the bill to see what the government is trying to do.

And from what I understand from the very brief comment that the minister spoke about, he talked about boundary descriptions as a result of some of the municipal governments, be it SARM or SUMA, being able to, you know, to look at the boundaries that they may have and have some kind of mechanisms to either increase or decrease their boundaries. They're talking about the service areas as well, Mr. Speaker, and they're also talking about a New West Agreement.

And people out there in Saskatchewanland should know the New West Agreement, according to the Sask Party, is an agreement between Alberta, Saskatchewan, and BC [British Columbia] in which they're going to work together to build a common front on trade and commerce and so on and so forth. And, Mr. Speaker, on the New West Agreement, we have a number of issues that we want to speak on that, because there are some problem areas that we in the opposition want to point out. And certainly I think as a result of some of the points that the minister raised, we want to expose some of the challenges

with the New West Agreement to make sure that the minister is aware what's going on and that the public is also apprised of what's going on as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, both SUMA and SARM have been consulted on these agreements, as the minister has spoken about. Certainly being a former member of SUMA, I can tell you that this organization is very valuable. They've got the cities, you've got the villages, and you've got some of the northern communities all working as a collective from the towns' and villages' perspective. And of course SARM being the RMs, they also have a very equal if not greater organization, making sure that their views are heard and making sure that their entity is given and afforded a lot of respect, Mr. Speaker.

So I think the point being that SUMA and SARM are two organizations that are going to watch very carefully how this bill proceeds. Mr. Speaker, they want to make sure that what they have asked for in the bill is followed through word for word, because obviously I think a lot of folks within SARM and SUMA may not totally trust the Sask Party on making sure that when they ask some things to be done on their behalf, that it's followed through as properly as it should be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the first things that pop into my head when I read Bill 73, in many ways it's a subtle form, in my opinion, and I think also a step in the direction of amalgamation, Mr. Speaker. There's no question in my mind. And you look at some of the language that the Sask Party uses on this particular bill, that it talks about boundary descriptions. It talks about service areas. It talks about the New West Agreement, Mr. Speaker. It makes reference to CAPP, which is the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, all that language, it's probably language that many, many people out there are a bit worried about. Because really, if you look at how the Sask Party have proceeded on many fronts, I think the Sask Party, quite frankly, want to see amalgamation of the RMs happen. They want to see less and less administration of lands, of smaller areas of lands throughout the province because, Mr. Speaker, obviously it's their intent to remove, as they have spoken, any impediment to development. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the Sask Party that working with SUMA and SARM, as I spoke about earlier, don't view these organizations as impediments but rather partners.

And what I see again, as I mentioned at the outset here, is the fact that I think these are the first few steps towards amalgamation, something that the RMs and SARM have really despised any discussion on the word or on the process of amalgamating. And they are going to certainly be watching this particular bill very closely.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the boundary description talking about service areas, what exactly does this all entail? Obviously as the minister mentioned that there are pockets of housing developments happening. There are certain resort areas that are expanding. There are certain communities that are trying to service lots and sell these lots in and around some of their rec sites. So I think, Mr. Speaker, that kind of activity, one has to be very, very careful that (a) first of all that you're properly zoning and properly planning these areas, but (b) how does it

conform to the area? How does it impact the RMs? How does it impact the villages? Where do the taxes go?

These are really complex discussions, Mr. Speaker, complex discussions in the sense that there has to be not only SARM and SUMA at the table, but there has to be developers at the table. There's got to be people that have been leading some of the communities at the table of the impacted areas, mayors or reeves. These are the people that have to be involved, Mr. Speaker. And this is something that I would suggest that people don't take too lightly because when you start talking about boundary description, Mr. Speaker, it really begs the question, what exactly is this all about?

And I would suggest that these are the few steps, the trying steps that the Sask Party are undertaking to see how they can move the amalgamations of the RMs further along down the path, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly what I think is happening with this particular bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, under the New West Agreement — and SUMA and SARM would know this, and many people have looked at this agreement with the Sask Party and of course the Sask Party sitting with Alberta and BC in formulating this partnership, Mr. Speaker — one of the things that the minister alluded to in this particular bill, he talked about municipal procurement. And what that means, Mr. Speaker, is that a lot of the RMs, whether they're in SUMA or whether they're in SARM, whether you're dealing with the community as a mayor or as a reeve, they have a number of contracts that they let each year. And some of these contracts vary in scope of work and certainly vary in value.

Now what I think is happening with the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, is they have, through the New West Partnership, they have been manipulated by Alberta and BC, basically being told that any contract work for SARM or for SUMA under or over a specified amount has to be advertised in Alberta and British Columbia. And, Mr. Speaker, they say we will also do that for Saskatchewan. Any work that any of our communities are going to do in BC or Alberta, we will certainly advertise in Saskatchewan as well.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Saskatchewan Party's been had by this New West Partnership. It is not about growing a strategic partnership with Alberta and BC, Mr. Speaker. It's really about putting at risk the autonomy of some of our local community leaders. And when they do some work at their local level, wouldn't they like to be able to allocate some of that work to some of their local businesses and some of their people that have been providing that service for years? And, Mr. Speaker, I would think that they would.

So my whole point being is that under the New West Partnership Agreement and some of the comments the minister made in reference to Bill 73, it may now force RMs, reeves, and councils, as well as municipal governments in cities, towns, and villages, the mayors and the councillors, they now have to go through a process to advertise any work over a specified amount. And I believe, I could be corrected on that amount, Mr. Speaker. I think it's \$50,000. And really, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the people of Saskatchewan were made aware of this particular problem when the Premier and some of the Sask

Party representatives were touting this New West Partnership with them and BC and Alberta.

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, we do have the agreement on interprovincial trade, which is a national agreement that was before this New West Partnership, Mr. Speaker. So it wasn't just window dressing that we thought the Saskatchewan Party was doing. They are really doing a lot of things that are quite frankly misunderstood by a lot of people, or not understood; and secondly, Mr. Speaker, certainly not with their input nor their advice.

So we look at the boundary description. You look at the service area comments that the minister made on this particular bill. He made reference to the New West Agreement, Mr. Speaker, and one of the things on the New West Agreement as well is on overweight permits, as the minister alluded to, that if you're driving through one RM, and there is an understanding that the RM has issued some company out of Alberta or some company out of BC the right to haul over limits on our roads, then guess what? No other RM can stop that company or that person from hauling overweight loads on their RM roads or through their towns, Mr. Speaker.

Now is there any provision there for dangerous goods? Is there any kind of dangerous good provisions that would be implicated as a result of this particular rule? And, Mr. Speaker, I think those are some of the questions that we have to ask in opposition because obviously there are dangerous goods that are being transferred all throughout Saskatchewan, and we hope that the designation of dangerous good routes, the safe handling of the dangerous goods, and the policy and procedures are well understood.

But does this change in the process that the minister spoke about and saying that trucking companies can apply for permits from some of the RMs in the province and that permit must be respected throughout all the RMs and all the different towns and villages that truck may travel through . . . And, Mr. Speaker, we hope that that is clearly understood by all the partners. And I can almost guarantee you that the RMs are very territorial, not only in servicing their highways and working with their people, but also making sure that rules and regulations are not forced on them and that they should respect their local autonomy and respect their local decision-making process. And I think that some of the comments that the minister made severely compromises that.

[14:45]

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the overweight situation that I spoke about in terms of the challenge that some of the trucking industry may face to the structures of our roads, it is really a major problem, Mr. Speaker. That if you don't have uniform processes, that you don't have good rules and regulations to make sure that there isn't overweights on our roads, and we have a difficult time as a province to find the resources to ensure that the weight restrictions are followed, to ensure that safety is not compromised, and to ensure that the trucking industry has good, solid monitoring in place so as to ensure that, not only for their safety but the public safety as well, that this is a role that the government has to play.

Now the RMs and the communities and the villages and the cities, well they don't have those same staff members. They don't have the resources of a senior government to be able to follow up and follow through to ensure that the trucking industry and some of the overweights and the dangerous goods that they're hauling throughout our communities and RMs, that there is some monitoring, that there's some oversight of that particular industry.

So the point being is that if that is something that the Saskatchewan Party want to weaken, then they would bring that issue forward through Bill 73 as the minister has referenced in some of his opening comments. The fact that if there is a licence for overweight limits and permits issued by an RM, all the other RMs have to abide by that permit and, Mr. Speaker, that is something I think is going to be problematic for the Sask Party.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister also talked about licence fees and the issuance of licence fees and the fact that he suspects that there may be revenues from the licence fees and how they're going to work with SUMA and SARM on the licence fees issue. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, it also begs the question: who gets the proceeds of these licence fees? If there's going to be more licence fees needed or they're increasing the amount that the fees are in place now, who gets the revenues?

And I would suspect and hope and pray, Mr. Speaker, that any additional revenues that come from permitting and certainly comes from licensing, whether it's an overweight issue, that those fees should go to the RM or should go to the community. And the reason being, Mr. Speaker, is we don't want this government to view this process as a cash grab and therefore it's important that we get those questions answered ASAP [as soon as possible].

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that's really worrisome on this particular bill is the debt limits of some of our municipal partners whether again, whether it's through SARM or SUMA, that they're going to allow the debt limit to increase. Now what are the parameters of the increase that they're allowing these communities to go into debt? And that's something that's really, really important because, as we know, many communities in many regions not only struggle with some of the current services that they provide to the residents but, Mr. Speaker, there is a huge, huge infrastructure challenge facing Saskatchewan over the next 5 to 10 years, if not sooner. And that, of course, infrastructure is called water and sewer services, Mr. Speaker. And many of these communities cannot afford to do some of this work on their own.

So when you talk about allowing them to increase the debt, is this Sask Party's way of saying, look you guys, you need the water and sewer, we'll let you guys borrow more money? And, Mr. Speaker, you've got to begin to ask the question, is this affordable for some of the RMs? Is this affordable and doable for some of the communities that may need these services, Mr. Speaker? And I can tell you that is a daunting task that's faced by our municipal partners. And without solid support from the federal, provincial government — which I know they won't get — then the only obvious solution that the Sask Party has on this front is to allow communities to increase their debt and to increase their amount of borrowing.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's the sad reality of the Saskatchewan Party nowadays is, on one hand they say to the communities, we'll give you some increase in operating your local governments. But on the other hand, they aren't going to help with your water and sewer. On the other hand, they're going to amalgamate your services. On the other hand, they're going to make sure that you can't interfere with overweight licences or permits that one RM may give and others may not like. These are some of the things, Mr. Speaker, I think is a very huge problem for the people that are our municipal partners. And more so, it is going to be a problem for future generations as they're going to have to pay some of these costs.

The other matter, Mr. Speaker, is the whole notion of the debt limit being allowed to be increased under this particular bill. And the most amazing hypocrisy on this particular process, Mr. Speaker, on Bill 73, is on one hand, the Saskatchewan Party turns around and says, and says to the school board association, SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], we're not going to allow you to tax property any more on the education front. We're not going to allow you to do that. We're going to be able to set your budgets because we're a senior government and we'll do what's best for education. And so therefore, the SSBA, the school boards association, we're told that they no longer have taxing powers and this was, of course, compliments of the Sask Party.

Now what's happening here — it's a bit confusing to us on this particular bill — is that they're not allowing the school divisions to generate their own revenues for the purposes of running their school divisions. But under this bill, they're allowing, they're allowing municipalities to increase their debt, giving them that arbitrary choice to increase their debts for whatever money that they may need.

So the confusion here, Mr. Speaker, is why are you being hypocritical and critical towards the school boards association's taxing power for educational purposes, but you're then turning around and offering the RMs and some of the municipal governments throughout our province the ability to increase debt? Isn't that the same thing? Isn't that the same thing, Mr. Speaker?

And that's why I go back to my earlier point. I think this government is going to move forward on their amalgamation agenda, and this bill is a good example. Bill 73 is a good example of how they're going to subtly do some of the things that will force these communities to eventually amalgamate, Mr. Speaker. And all the language, all the language of the amalgamation argument includes boundary description, service areas, the New West Agreement provisions. They talk about licensing fees, and they talk about debt limits, Mr. Speaker.

All that wording and all the terminology used by the minister in describing Bill 73 leads us to believe within opposition that they are well on their way, they are well on their way to amalgamating some of our RMs and some of our communities. And I wouldn't put it too far in the future, Mr. Speaker, where we'll see smaller communities begin to dry up because they have no municipal services from this government. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that that's just fine with the Sask Party that they don't have to defend nor support these smaller communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of issues that I want to take forward on this Bill 73. I would warn the people, I would warn the people of Saskatchewan that if you let some of these bills go through without scrutiny, without research, and without getting partners that are involved as a result of this bill to participate in giving us advice, then you're allowing the Sask Party to do what they want at will.

We know that the Sask Party is going to move forward with amalgamating a lot of the RMs and amalgamating a lot of the communities because, as we've heard time and time again, that the Sask Party want to get rid of the impediments to development. And some of those impediments, Mr. Speaker, is the RM structure that the Sask Party want to get rid of. And, Mr. Speaker, what's the best way to do that? It's to allow them to go broke, to not give them any services, to allow them to fight amongst themselves, and most important of all is to say, one RM allocates an important permit like an overweight permit; all the other RMs have to abide by that. You're going to create some conflict.

Because I know how solid and I know how important that the RMs feel their role is to protect the interest of their RM. And when you have an arbitrary decision made by the Sask Party that really debases the local autonomy and control, then I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is a huge problem for the RMs and for SUMA. So whether it's boundary description, service areas, the New West Agreement — which I think is really contrary to Saskatchewan's interest — whether it's licence fees, Mr. Speaker, or whether it's the debt limit increasing for some of the partner communities within SUMA or SARM, I think, Mr. Speaker, that this Saskatchewan Party government has a lot of explaining to do because this bill's going to take a lot of scrutiny and it's going to certainly garner a lot of attention from the different folks out there.

And I can tell you that some of the evidence, the wording, the actions, and the intent behind this bill, I would say to the people within SUMA and SARM that amalgamation is the Sask Party's agenda. And Bill 73 is the first step towards doing that, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest that people would be highly offended if they paid close attention to what the bill's all about, and what the minister's comments were, and of course what our position is as the official opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more I want to say on Bill 73. There's a lot more that my colleagues want to say as well on Bill 73. So we will take the opportunity, as I mentioned time and time again, to look at the bill, assess the bill, see what the bill is going to do in terms of the good of the bill, or what the net effect is in terms of the negative effect of the bill. And that's the role of the opposition — to warn the people.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 73. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Carried.

Bill No. 74 — *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. This bill will amend *The Cities Act*, which provides the legislative framework through which Saskatchewan's 16 cities exercise their powers and provide services. The Act and its regulations have been in effect since January 1st, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note that I said Saskatchewan's 16 cities. This now includes the city of Warman that officially became the province's 16th just a few short weeks ago on Saturday, October 27th. This is an example of the growth and development that is occurring in this province. Government intends to continue this growth now and into the future.

The amendments proposed in this bill do four things. First they will improve processes related to boundary alterations or annexations to make it work better for the cities and municipalities involved, for the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, and to support our government's growth strategy. Second, they respond to requests for amendments from the city governments for consistent authorities and treatment among the three municipal Acts regarding matters such as unpaid utility charges and trailer home permitting. Third, they support the intent of agreements such as the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade in areas such as business licensing and municipal procurement. Fourth, they address other requests from across the municipal sector to clarify wording and improve consistency among the municipal Acts regarding primarily administrative matters and make other changes identified by the minister to clarify areas such as education property tax reporting, licence fees, and purchasing policies.

I will expand briefly on the amendments in each of these areas. First, the amendments related to the process for boundary alterations in *The Cities Act* include the following: a new time limit on how long a municipality must wait for a response to proposed annexation application from the other affected municipality; requiring mediation before the Saskatchewan Municipal Board hears and decides an application for annexation on which the affected municipal councils cannot reach agreement; providing clear authority for the approval of a portion of or parts of an application by the board; and clarifying that an application may be amended or withdrawn at any time up until the board completes its review, after which the board's decision shall apply.

These amendments I just mentioned are consistent with amendments proposed to all three municipal Acts and *The Municipal Board Act* this session that we believe will improve and expedite the boundary alteration process. Government encourages cities and their surrounding municipalities to work co-operatively to resolve differences and to plan for and support the growth and development that's occurring in our province.

The second main area of amendments responds to requests from

the cities and SUMA for authorities consistent with the other two municipal Acts, *The Municipalities Act* and *The Northern Municipalities Act*, regarding matters such as unpaid municipal utility charges and trailer home permitting. The proposed amendments will allow cities to add unpaid city utility charges incurred by a tenant to property taxes provided that prior notice is given to the tenant and property owner and any utility deposits are applied to the charges. This authority was requested by resolution of SUMA. It's already provided in the other two municipal Acts. All three Acts are being made consistent in terms of prior notice and other requirements before such charges can be added, and this is in order to ensure municipalities make reasonable efforts to collect the outstanding charges before turning to the property owner.

[15:00]

Cities have also requested the ability to license and permit trailer homes as an alternative to assessing and taxing these as improvements, similar to the existing authority in the other two Acts. This does not impact recreational trailers and is an alternative to assessing and taxing these trailers as improvements.

The next category of amendments includes enabling cities to establish and enter into intermunicipal agreements and arrangements that reconcile business licensing requirements so that a business or certain types of businesses could operate across participating municipalities under a single licence. They are voluntary provisions and ensure cities have the legislative authority to agree on such arrangements. These amendments support this province's commitments under agreements such as the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade. This will encourage municipalities to reconcile their business licensing regimes similar to what Saskatchewan has done in partnership with the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia regarding the extraprovincial business registration option that became effective this past July.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the amendments address other requests from stakeholders to clarify certain administrative matters such as the signing of council meeting minutes, consistent terminology regarding service or filing of assessment appeal notices, and adding contact information for appellant agents to assessment appeal notices. These have been requested by the cities through their city solicitors, city assessors, and city clerks.

My ministry also identified amendments to clarify certain provisions, for example those regarding education property tax reporting. These reports will now go to Government Relations instead of the Ministry of Education. As well other amendments clarify that fees for issuing a permit, inspection, or approval not exceed the cost of administration and enforcement similar to the present situation regarding licence fees.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry consulted extensively on these amendments with the city sector, including individual cities and city officials as well as with SUMA and the Saskatchewan Association of City Clerks. Other stakeholder groups were also consulted on specific aspects of the proposed amendments. These consultations began in mid-February 2012 and concluded this past summer. They involved meetings as well as sharing

proposed wording of the amendments for review, comment, revision, or refinement. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank those individuals who took the time to provide input, advice, and feedback in the development of this legislation.

In conclusion, the amendments proposed to *The Cities Act* address issues identified by that sector, by the ministry, and others to improve and streamline processes. They encourage and support intermunicipal co-operation, consultation, and forward-looking planning, and the amendments meet the needs of our cities, the public, and businesses to support the continued growth of this province. And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The Minister of Government Relations has moved that the Bill 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to again rise on behalf of the official opposition and give our comments on Bill 74. Now, Mr. Speaker, we are very, very pleased to see that the addition of two more cities in the province is something that we want to applaud and we want to commend all those people that have been involved. And, Mr. Speaker, we want to see the growth of Saskatchewan's population and the economy continue. There is no question that having 16 cities in Saskatchewan is a great accomplishment for us as a province and that's something that goes without saying. The opposition certainly wants to see that continued growing and the continued economy that's necessary to sustain services in our population.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the minister makes references in introducing some of these bills to — and I use the word loosely — to the growth plan of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, what we see on this side of the Assembly, and it all relates to Bill 74, Mr. Speaker, is we're seeing growing debt. There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that it's \$1 billion more into debt that the Sask Party has created as a result of the announcement today. They were half a billion dollars off on their projections for oil and gas and also for potash, Mr. Speaker. So the only thing that Saskatchewan sees from the Saskatchewan Party's growth plan is a growing debt and a growing distrust for a government that can't seem to get their numbers right when they're doing estimates as to what they expect from certain sectors. And, Mr. Speaker, they were way off on potash, they were way off on oil and gas, and now you're seeing Saskatchewan being saddled with a \$1 billion debt.

Now how does that relate to Bill 74, Mr. Speaker? That's exactly my point, Mr. Speaker, is that while you have a government coming along, tweaking here and tweaking there on some of the municipal agendas, Mr. Speaker, they're doing greater and grander damage to Saskatchewan and to our cities and to our towns and our villages and our RMs by not managing the resources of the province right.

So here we have in this situation under Bill 74, the minister making reference to their growth strategy. And that growth strategy is a big joke, Mr. Speaker, because all we've seen

that's been growing here, Mr. Speaker, is a growing debt, and as I mentioned, a heavy reliance, a heavy reliance to balance their books on the backs of municipal governments, and a heavy reliance from people out there in Saskatchewanland that are paying more for their power, paying more for their gas, paying more for their telephone, paying more for all kinds of services, Mr. Speaker.

And then they make reference to that silly notion they call Saskatchewan's growth strategy, Mr. Speaker. They make reference to that when introducing bills of this sort. They do small little things on bills of this sort to try and say they appear to be doing something, and they turn around and do something absolutely ludicrous and ridiculous to hurt some of the communities that are being impacted by Bill 74. And some of the ludicrous things they do, Mr. Speaker, as evidenced today, is they're increasing our debt by \$1 billion as a result of their mismanagement, their gross mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. And there's going to be a lot more words about their mismanagement as time goes on, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing that.

Now what I tell the people that may be watching this particular process under Bill 74, our municipal partners, and *The Cities Act*, we're talking about *The Cities Act* and how they're going to tweak a few things here and there. We're talking about people that may have had a power bill or a gas bill attached to a property that has been unpaid. Now they're going to make sure that there's some means in which the city can actually get the bill paid before the sale to another party is undertaken. That's what I assume the minister made reference to when they talked about an unpaid bill that is left on properties. Now we're all for that, Mr. Speaker.

So when the cities ask for things of this sort, their intent as a city is to try and become efficient and to try and become methodical and organized in some way to make sure that they administer the city's affairs well. And that's what I'm talking about, the little tweaks here and there. But the minor actions that this Sask Party government as evidenced in Bill 74 are no way, in any way, shape, or form complemented by the manner in which they're managing the finances of our province. I think the critic used the phrase of \$1 billion in debt increase today, our Finance critic. And that's an absolute shame.

And one of the things that people out there in Saskatchewanland have always maintained, Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing we'd like to see happen is we'd like the government to manage our economy and manage our finances well. And today as a result of some of the mid-year financial statements that the Finance minister has unveiled, we can have Bill 74 that may help the cities and a small tweak here and there that might be of value to the cities, Mr. Speaker. But the greatest challenge or the greater challenge is the big global issues and how the Sask Party has failed miserably to manage the finances of the province of Saskatchewan.

Bill 74, Mr. Speaker, again we talk about things like boundary issues. And boundary issues I think, Mr. Speaker, again goes back to the earlier statement I made from the previous bill on the whole notion of amalgamation.

Now what we've got to try and figure out, Mr. Speaker, on *The*

Cities Act is that there are 16 cities in Saskatchewan that are being impacted by some of these bills. And I mentioned the tweaking that's going on, and I'm sure that the SUMA and SARM have had their say. But really I think overall, Mr. Speaker, is there other major issues that the Sask Party is not dealing with by putting bills of this sort that the cities may have asked for? We don't know the answer to that question. But I can say one thing though, Mr. Speaker, is every city administrator, every mayor and council of the 16 cities probably managed their money a heck of a lot better than the Sask Party has been managing ours, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the point, is that when we talk about leadership at the municipal level it's very, very important — it's very important — that we recognize the work that they have done and, Mr. Speaker, the parameters in which they operate, Mr. Speaker. And the most important thing is that they're not mismanaging our cities' budgets much like the Sask Party has been mismanaging our provincial budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan cities the question that I would like to ask is from the municipal perspective, *The Cities Act* themselves, I understand from my experience within the municipal politics is that municipalities cannot predict a deficit, that a community has to show through the proper process that a city or the towns or villages are not going broke and, in this case Bill 74, that they've got to show a financial plan as part of the agreement for funding that shows that they're not going hopelessly in debt.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing now is that many of the cities have been forced to do one thing, as a result of the Sask Party's incompetence at managing the economy nor the finances of our province, is we're seeing a lot of cities going into huge debt. They're going into huge debt. And much of the taxpayers, the Saskatchewan taxpayers out there may not know that they are being taxed in many ways, shapes, or forms to cover some of that huge debt load. Because any time a city borrows, guess what? The residents are paying those bills.

So quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, again there is a hypocrisy in the manner in which the Sask Party's been governing this province. On one hand, as I mentioned in Bill 74, they're allowing the community or the cities to retain more debt — and the universities are another story — but in this case the cities are also increasing their debt. Well what happens is the people of Saskatchewan have to pay it, and the people of those communities have to pay it.

Now what happens if the same parameters, the same guidelines that the Sask Party forces onto our larger centres in making sure that they have a good, transparent accounting system, Mr. Speaker, if they had the same process that they have designated the cities to undertake when they're talking about their financial statements — that they've got to be accountable, they've got to be transparent, and they've got to follow certain rules and regulations and models, Mr. Speaker? Why hasn't the Sask Party followed what they preach? It's because people would find out, as the auditor has, that how they do their books, Mr. Speaker, it's very, very confusing.

Today now the bottom line is we have to take their word and their document. And we have to look at it and say, what have

they done? And in their own very document, the mid-year financial statement, Mr. Speaker, they have shown that Saskatchewan's debt is increasing \$1 billion — \$1 billion as a result of the Sask Party's incompetence. And all we asked them when they assumed the growing population, the booming economy, and money in the bank when we left government, Mr. Speaker, in 2007, we asked them not to mess it up. And what did they do? They messed it up.

And this is another example of how in Bill 74 is in the 16 cities, they now have to pay for the incompetence of the Sask Party. So people out there that are property owners or get service from the city, you see the increase in some of the taxes and the service fees. Guess what? That's a result of the incompetence of the Sask Party. Do not blame the cities, Mr. Speaker, because they're the ones trying to do the job properly. They're the ones that have followed the rules and regulations. They're the ones that have all the responsibility, Mr. Speaker. And about the only people that don't have any responsibility and blame everybody for all the problems and can't seem to manage things at all, Mr. Speaker, are the 49 souls across the way called the Saskatchewan Party.

So I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 74, where they talk about the cities in general, don't make any reference to your growth strategy because it's counterproductive. It's very counterproductive from our perspective. We need to deal with the cities on an individual basis as a separate entity. Don't tie them to your silly growth strategy because nobody really buys that anyway, Mr. Speaker. It's got to be the silliest slogan that ever ... Whoever come up with that slogan in the Saskatchewan Party ought to be sent back, back to public education to try and find a different slogan. Because the growth strategy slogan that the Sask Party is using actually, Mr. Speaker, is a big, fat joke.

So I think it's really important that people out there, I think, understand that. And the cities, the cities themselves, Mr. Speaker, they're doing a great job of promoting our province. They're doing a great job of promoting their cities. They're doing a great job of promoting their businesses in spite of the incompetence of the Sask Party. And that's one of the things that we ought to recognize and fully support and oversee what the Sask Party has in plan or has in store for the cities that are very successful.

[15:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that this is once again much similar to the previous bill, that there some concerns about boundary issues. I would hope that some of the recent issues they brought up in the Assembly in relation to the transportation hub outside this particular city, that some of these issues can be resolved, that there's the RMs involved, the cities involved, there's a bunch of other issues at play here. And this is one of the examples where I've indicated that the RMs seem to know what they're doing. The cities seems to know what they're doing. But one of the biggest confusing partners in all that, Mr. Speaker, is of course the Sask Party government.

So every time we have the comments of this and that in terms of what the Sask Party envisions as their growth plan, there's a collective laugh over here in the opposition. Because that's

exactly what we think is, it's a very laughable slogan that they picked up, Mr. Speaker. They talk about growth, and I mentioned the only thing growing in the province under the Sask Party is our debt. The only thing growing under the Sask Party is the ever-increasing amounts that people pay for their power bills, for their phone bills, for their gas bills, Mr. Speaker.

And that the only thing growing in this particular process, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance's nose because every time he gets up and claims it's a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, we see that nose growing and growing and growing. And every time he gets up to explain, to explain his budget, he turns red. And, Mr. Speaker, then to us that signifies embarrassment in how the money has or how the finances have been mismanaged. And, Mr. Speaker, may his name be attached next to the \$1 billion deficit in the history of Saskatchewan as the person responsible for that debt under this particular Premier.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of issues that are at play on Bill 74. There are 16 cities who want to see the growth continue. We're happy to see them as great accountable partners. They have some issues that they want to be resolved, and we're going to follow those issues here in Bill 74. The municipal partners seem to be doing very well, but they know on the horizon, Mr. Speaker, they see, the leaders see, that there is going to be some challenges. One of them is infrastructure challenges because many communities need to replace their water and sewer systems. The cities themselves know that they've got to find ways and means that they can develop land and develop more lots for people to build homes on. These are all the challenges that the cities see down the road.

But the number one thing that they would expect the cities, in the partnership mode with anybody in this particular situation with the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, is they want that senior partner to be accountable, to be balanced, and not to spin numbers so as to appear to have a balanced budget. So any time the Saskatchewan Party talk about a balanced budget, there's a huge round of laughter on this side of the House because it's exactly the response that should be given when the minister gets up and talks about this balanced budget. Balanced, schmalanced — that's what we say on this side of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important that we continue hammering home, and I say today, Mr. Speaker, that the first time the Saskatchewan Party were out of sync on their projections for potash, I think it's something like \$2 billion. Was that 2 billion, John? Two billion dollars they were off; just a hair on the outside of their projections, Mr. Speaker. Today now they're only half a billion off. So at least they're getting better, not much better, but at least they're getting better at suffering huge losses on their projections for income.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's going to continue. That is going to continue. We see there's some very dark clouds on the horizon which we were hoping would never happen, Mr. Speaker. But that's exactly what you get when you put a right wing government in charge of an economy built by the NDP. They simply don't know how to do it. They simply don't know how to manage the finances. They don't know how to manage and sustain a growing population. They don't know how to manage a growing population. They can't meet the needs of that

growing population, Mr. Speaker.

And yet every time you hear them talk about anything, oh the right wing guys are going to figure out the economy. We should never leave a booming, growing industrial economy to the right wingers, Mr. Speaker, because they'll mess it up. And this is evidence of how easy they'd mess it up. Six years later, \$1 billion more to our debt, thanks to the Sask Party. And they come along and talk about their growth strategy, try and attach a growth strategy to that integral part of that really good growth, and that's the partners called the cities, Mr. Speaker. So every time they do their growth strategy attaching to a very valuable partner like the cities, Mr. Speaker, our job in opposition is to get up and tell the people the cities are good. The Sask Party is not.

Some of these things that they're trying to undertake, Mr. Speaker, the cities are making things happen in spite of the bungling and incompetence of the Sask Party, in spite of their inability to figure it out, Mr. Speaker, the cities are still doing a good job. And on this side of the Assembly, every time they mention growth strategy, on this side of the Assembly, the opposition simply look at them and wonder which planet are these 49 people from.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out today that Bill 74, the 16 cities in Saskatchewan, we congratulate the two new cities, and we tell them we look forward to continuing seeing the leadership in balancing your budget and making things happen in Saskatchewan, in spite of the Sask Party's bungling. We encourage the cities to continue building and to continue living within their means and to continue monitoring what the province does under things like Bill 74, and above all else, Mr. Speaker, to take no lessons on how to build an economy or how to build infrastructure from the Sask Party. Because they just don't have the competency to provide that advice, Mr. Speaker, and that's the bottom line. We encourage them to continue building.

Don't take advice from these guys because they don't have a clue what they're doing. They don't have a clue what they're doing. And all they seem to do, Mr. Speaker, is that they go from one crisis to another. They bungle one issue after another, and they turn around and say, look what we did, when they didn't have any, even a remote connection to what's happening in Saskatchewan today.

The economy's moving, population's growing. People are optimistic, Mr. Speaker. And we all knew that was going to come, and it'll continue in spite of the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. And it would have been even better under the NDP government because they would have done things right. They would have done things with a plan, would have done things with a vision, Mr. Speaker. And the problem with that government is they just don't know how to do it. And that's the bottom line. They just don't know what they're doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, as much as we have a lot of comments on Bill 74, my colleagues want to get into the discussion of this bill. They want to network with some of their contacts. And the only bit of advice we'd have for our city partners that have been identified in this bill is, every time they mention growth strategy to you, head for the nearest exit because that's where

you should go. Cities as partners here, don't take any advice from the Sask Party on how to grow Saskatchewan because they'd mess it up. They have messed it up, Mr. Speaker. And they have messed it up, despite having \$2.5 billion left in their bank account. Today, now, five years later, we're increasing debt by \$1 billion. So any time you have a Sask Party member visit you as cities, and they talk growth strategy, you either turn up the fans so you can't hear them or head for the nearest exit, Mr. Speaker.

So on Bill 74, to the 16 cities of Saskatchewan, we'll work with you. We'll want to connect with you. We want to learn from you as to how to build and continue to build in the economy. And, Mr. Speaker, above all else, the only warning we would have for the cities under Bill 74 is make sure you follow up and follow through with what the minister was speaking about because we hope they don't bungle that up too. Because the intent of what they're trying to do here in making the cities stronger is something that we admire. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, we want to take the time to look at the bill, to sincerely assess the bill and to talk and work with our partner communities and partner organizations, especially our 16 cities, on how to become more effective as a government.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 74.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Carried.

Bill No. 75 — *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. This bill will amend *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010* which provides the legal framework for the governance and administration of northern municipalities. These Acts are being amended to support government directives and better meet sector needs.

The amendments proposed in this bill serve the following purposes. First, they support government's competitiveness and growth strategy related to business licensing, overweight vehicle permitting, boundary alteration, and municipal procurement. Second, they provide northern councils with greater ability to deal with inactive municipal development corporations, clarify provisions regarding northern hamlet incorporation and northern settlement dissolution, and make terms of office for members appointed to the northern municipal trust account management board consistent with those for municipal councillors, which is four years. Third, they address other requests from across the municipal sector to clarify wording and improve consistency among the municipal

Acts regarding primarily administrative matters. They make other changes identified by the ministry to clarify areas such as education property tax reporting, licence fees, and purchasing policies.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few moments to highlight some of these changes. First, to support growth and enhance competitiveness in Saskatchewan, amendments to the business-licensing provisions will enable municipalities to establish and enter intermunicipal agreements and arrangements that reconcile business-licensing requirements such that a business or certain types of businesses may operate across participating municipalities under a single licence. They are voluntary provisions and ensure municipalities have the legislative authority to agree on such arrangements since these are regulatory powers. These amendments also support the intent of agreements such as the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade to encourage municipalities to reconcile their licensing regimes similar to what Saskatchewan has done in partnership with the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia regarding the extraprovincial business registration option that became effective this past July.

In addition, amendments to the overweight vehicle permitting provisions will give municipalities explicit authority to voluntarily enter into an agreement that would allow for an overweight permit issued by one of the municipalities that is part of the agreement to be recognized in the other municipalities that are also part of that agreement.

Further, amendments to the boundary alteration provisions will improve and expedite the annexation process to make it work better for the municipalities involved and for the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. These provisions will remove barriers impeding economic growth. They encourage municipalities to work co-operatively to resolve issues and differences to promote and support the growth and development occurring in our province and in our communities.

The second category of amendments is more specific to the North to meet northern needs and support greater accountability. This bill includes amendments to assist northern municipalities to address inactive municipal development corporations. The municipalities involved have primary responsibility to address these issues by either dissolving the corporation or remedying any non-compliance issue. The amendments will clarify authority of municipalities to ensure municipal development corporations are meeting the requirements of this Act, such as relating to financial reporting or the Act under which it is incorporated.

This bill also contains amendments related to northern hamlet incorporation and northern settlement dissolution. The northern hamlet incorporation amendments include a prescribed minimum taxable assessment as a criterion for northern hamlet incorporation. This amendment will provide greater consistency between this Act and *The Municipalities Act* with respect to incorporation at the first level of municipal status, and it's intended to ensure municipal capacity at this level.

The northern settlement dissolution amendments will clarify the process of allocating funding for the benefit of the area that was formerly a northern settlement. This process is unique to

northern settlements only. The amendments will add flexibility to accommodate different situations in communities. It's more appropriate to make the determination of allocating funding for the benefit of the area that was formerly a northern settlement in consultation with the community and based on analysis of the individual community needs.

The last main category of amendments addresses other requests of stakeholders to clarify certain administrative matters such as the signing of council meeting minutes, consistent terminology regarding service or filing of assessment appeal notices, and adding contact information for appellant agents to assessment appeal notices.

These changes were initially requested by others in the municipal sector to either *The Cities Act* or *The Municipalities Act*. To ensure consistency among the municipal Acts, these amendments are also included in this bill.

My ministry also identified amendments to clarify certain provisions such as those regarding education property tax reporting. These reports will now go to the Ministry of Government Relations instead of the Ministry of Education and clarifying that fees for issuing a permit, inspection, or approval not exceed the costs of administration and enforcement — similar to the present situation regarding licence fees.

In addition, back in the spring 2010 session, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2010* was in the Legislative Assembly for consideration and received Royal Assent at the same time with a few other Acts. Because of that, a few amendments could not be made at that time due to technical reasons. This bill contains those amendments as a consequence of the enactment of several Acts in the spring 2010 session.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, these amendments were developed in consultation with SUMA, New North, and the Northern Municipal Trust Account Management Board. These consultations began in mid-February 2012 and concluded at the end of August and involved sharing drafts side by side of all the amendments for review and comment. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those individuals who took the time to provide input, advice, and feedback in the development of this legislation.

In conclusion, this bill will address issues identified by the municipal sector, the ministry, and others to improve and streamline processes. These amendments strengthen accountability and transparency and encourage and support, co-operation, consultation, and forward-looking planning. They meet the needs of northern municipalities, the public, and business to support the continued growth of the province. And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The Minister of Government Relations has moved that Bill No. 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once again I am pleased to be able to rise today to give our initial comments on Bill 75. And I looked at some of the examples of the bill that this particular government has brought forward. And, Mr. Speaker, whether it's the first bill where we talk about amalgamation or the second bill of the city where they're doing a little bit of tweaking but basically staying out of the way when it comes to the cities being able to drive the economy of Saskatchewan forward, and now it looks at the northern bill itself, the first words out of the minister's mouth on this particular bill is dissolution of some of the northern communities that may have a smaller population, Mr. Speaker. So once again you see some of the evidence of this particular government.

And how in the heck do you attach the word growth plan to the word dissolution of some of the northern governments, Mr. Speaker? And that's exactly the point I made earlier, that you look at some of the issues that the North has been struggling with. And this is what's really important. In northern Saskatchewan, because I have a lot of experience in the North, I travel to a lot of the communities. And you go to some of the smaller communities, and there may be 40, 50 people there, and they have a thriving community. Many of these people live off the land. Many of them have their own homes. They have vehicles. They have a great opportunity in some of these communities. And they also have a mayor and they have a few councillors that they basically look after their affairs, and they run a lot of services out of the northern hamlets and out of these northern settlements, Mr. Speaker. And people expect that to happen. People expect that some of these communities will have leadership and that the services will be provided to them.

So here we go again. Like the oxymoron in this particular example is the Sask Party talking about a growth plan, Mr. Speaker, and in the next breath they're talking about dissolution of some of the northern settlements and some of the northern hamlets, Mr. Speaker. So it's really kind of a weird way of communicating with the people saying, oh, we want to talk about the growth plan, but here's the plan to really dissolve a lot of our northern communities of their status of being a hamlet or being a settlement.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan, once again, the same example I would say applies to this Act as the example used under *The Cities Act*. In northern Saskatchewan the communities, the First Nations bands as well as the local municipality authorities, whether they're the mayor and council or whether the chief and the band council, they want this government to do a number of things, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to have the government to ask of this major Bill 75, dissolve northern communities. That's not what they're asking for.

They're asking for the help. Build the economy in the North by giving us access to decent highways, by giving us access to decent training, to give us access to decent services, Mr. Speaker, and to also give us access to becoming part of all the decisions that are impacting, which many northern people feel, on the lands that they have occupied for generations and have used and have been used by their families and forefathers and so on and so forth.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the northern communities want is they also want cell coverage. We stand up every day. We talk about cellphone coverage and the need for some of these communities to be given the ability to utilize cellphone coverage. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what the northern communities want. They don't want what's provided under this particular bill, where you talk about dissolving their local council and firing their local mayor. That's not what this is about. What should happen is we should be embracing these partners and bringing them in together to talk about how we can build the northern economy stronger and one that'll be sustainable, Mr. Speaker.

So one of the things I think is really important under Bill 75, it really misses the mark. The intent, the tone, the direction that the minister has taken on this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, is way off. It is way off. We in the Assembly, both the member from Cumberland and I, we talk about things like support for the trapping industry. We talk about things like support for the commercial fishing industry. We talk about issues like the duty to consult, the forestry issues that impact our community, the fresh water, the pollution that's coming from Fort McMurray, Mr. Speaker. We talk about housing problems. We talk about highways problems. We talk about the lack of services. We talk about all these issues. Highways, cell phone, health services, housing, the lists goes on.

And what happens, Mr. Speaker, is about the only reference that the Sask Party has in their entire government is a reference under Bill 75 talking about dissolving some northern settlements and northern hamlets, Mr. Speaker. And that's the shame of the Saskatchewan Party right now today is that they don't realize the fact that many of these communities are bustling communities. Their economy is tied to the land. The economy is not tied to the 40 or 50 houses that constitute a settlement or constitute a hamlet, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the people live in these houses that are collectively in one spot, but their economy is much like the RM economy. It spreads far and wide, whether it's jobs at the mine site or whether it's tourism or whether it's commercial fishing or trapping or forestry. The land is what's providing the opportunities to some of these hamlets and settlements, Mr. Speaker. And these people have for many, many years been able to survive on that land. Now along comes the Sask Party, and one of their first major expressions of interest in northern Saskatchewan is Bill 75 talking about dissolving northern hamlets or dissolving settlements. And that's a crying shame, Mr. Speaker.

The other point that the minister mentioned was saying it's part of our growth strategy. It's part of our growth strategy. Now we're going to amalgamate and refine their licensing processes. Well let me tell you, Bear Creek doesn't have a bylaw enforcement officer. Garson Lake doesn't have a licensing process. You know the small hamlet of Patuanak doesn't have a process where you have an administrator, assistant administrator, and 10 staff to help provide those services. It's the mayor and the council and a few staff members that are doing all this work. So when you talk about the North and the hamlets and the settlements as if it's a large city that has all these services, I think you should do, as I told the Minister of Highways today, is get with the program and really start to understand your files.

The bottom line is you should be enhancing and working with these small hamlets and settlements to try and form a regional governance model, much like the RMs. Why aren't there RMs in northern Saskatchewan? Why aren't we part of the RM structure and having settlements like Grandmother's Bay become part of a larger management area? I mean why don't we have like Bear Creek and Sled Lake become wider-ranging, more authoritative entities, Mr. Speaker? You know why? Because northern Saskatchewan is rich with all kinds of resources.

There are tremendous values in the northern people, and they know, they know that the northern resource sector does a lot for the provincial sector. That we know, Mr. Speaker. So when the minister makes any reference to the North, the only words I've heard coming out of the Sask Party's mouths opposite is, we want to see if we can dissolve some of these northern communities.

Within the NDP, Mr. Speaker, had the Sask Party had any respect for northern Saskatchewan people, they wouldn't be telling, they wouldn't be showing the commercial fishing industry the disrespect that they've shown. And a good example of that, Mr. Speaker, is they cancelled our fish freight subsidy. They booted out Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation out of the province with no backup plan, and they just steadfastly refused to support the commercial fishing industry. They have rejected the commercial fishing industry. Then they turn around and they say, some of this action we're doing with the northern governments is meant to support our growth strategy. Well how in the heck did you dash all hopes of developing a commercial fishing industry, then talk about a growth strategy?

Then they turn around and look at the trapping industry. They have rejected the trapping industry's issues as well. They have said no to a lot of the funding. The funding, we don't think, is going to be back at all. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for the Environment wrote a letter to some of the leadership that are involved with the trapping industry, saying the duty to consult does not apply to the commercial trapping industry because it's not an impacted industry that was identified in the Supreme Court of Canada's decision.

And, Mr. Speaker, why didn't they say that before the last election? Why did they simply drag along the trappers and saying, oh we'll work with you; we'll do this with you? Then all of a sudden as soon as the election's over, oh we're sorry. The minister has no more time for you. Oh and by the way, by the way, the commercial trapping file, it's no longer part of our discussion under the duty to consult because it wasn't recognized by the legal people.

And that's exactly our point, Mr. Speaker, is that not only have they turned their backs on many other groups and organizations throughout the province. They have deliberately and with a lot of maliciousness have really turned their backs and have done things contrary, and have really hurt the commercial fishing sector. They have hurt the traditional trapping industry. They don't look at no industry in northern Saskatchewan that the Aboriginal people had developed having any merit in their growth plan.

And you look at some of the issues of forestry as well. No

investment into forestry whatsoever. So our people out there are doing the very best they can given the limited resources that they have to have some semblance of a community and have services, and of course of having a mayor and council in place to look after the area and to continue building partnerships with other communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, as you can see it is an absolute insult when they had the minister get up and make reference to the Sask Party's growth plan when they talk about simply dissolving some of these northern municipal governments. And then you see some of the action on the other side of how they totally ignored northern Saskatchewan. Last time we looked, looked for any kind of highway improvement or investment, and not one red cent for northern Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — They made a promise to Wollaston.

Mr. Belanger: — That's right. They made a promise to Wollaston. That money is gone. Four years later, Wollaston Lake still hasn't got a road.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some people out there would even go so far as they're saying, well they're penalizing the North because the North voted for NDP. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is us on this side of the Assembly do not believe that in any way, shape, or form. This has been the mean-spiritedness of the Sask Party for years and years, when they were called conservatives, when they got embarrassed on the national stage by the then leader, Jim Sinclair, about their downright disregard for the Aboriginal people and northern people, Mr. Speaker. Some of those days and some of those thoughts and processes are still being expressed across the way by the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. And some of those views are still held to this day — are still held to this day.

And the northern people, and the northern people would say this to them — you know, if I can capture their words — okay, if the Sask Party doesn't want to invest in our families, into our communities, into protecting some of the smaller municipal governments identified in Bill 75, of recognizing our needs and acknowledging our needs, then at the very least, at the very least, stop taking the resources out of the North and let us have some benefits of some of those resources and let us build our own economy. Let us do what we want to do in northern Saskatchewan. Give us back the land that you took away for forestry companies. Give us back the service rights that you dealt away by some of the larger mining companies. Give us the opportunity to train our own kids, to train our own grandkids to take over some of the jobs at the mining companies or some of the mine sites, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the North aren't anti-mining, Mr. Speaker. They want to see the benefits attached with some of the resources being hauled out of the North at the tune of billions of dollars each year. So northern Saskatchewan people sit there and they say, well why aren't you guys dealing with our issues? It's not because they voted NDP, Mr. Speaker. We tell people because they don't want to acknowledge the North. They don't want to acknowledge the Aboriginal people that live in the North, and the non-Aboriginal people. They don't want to spend the money to fix the roads and provide cell coverage or provide

addiction services or provide housing help, Mr. Speaker. All we want to do, the Sask Party, is suck as many resources out of northern Saskatchewan without spending no money and putting no money back, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what they want to do.

[15:45]

So it has nothing to do with who the northern people voted for, Mr. Speaker. It has everything to do with the Sask Party looks at the North as an opportunity to take billions out and putting nothing back, Mr. Speaker. And that, Mr. Speaker, from our perspective defines greed, Mr. Speaker, and from our perspective it defines outright disregard for our great people, people of northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now what do the people of northern Saskatchewan want, Mr. Speaker? They don't want no special deals. They don't want no special deals. You know, park your special deals somewhere. What the people of northern Saskatchewan want is they want a fair deal. They want a fair deal and recognizing that there's a lot of resources being taken out of the North. The North is rich in resources. And instead of taking, taking, taking, taking by the Sask Party, why don't you start putting some of the money back and investing properly in northern Saskatchewan? Instead the first bill that you make any reference in northern Saskatchewan on is Bill 75, and part of the discussion the minister spoke about was dissolving some of these northern municipal governments that may be too small for their liking.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the trappers, the commercial fishing industry, the Métis Nation, the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], the New North organization, many of the local chiefs and the mayors and the MLAs, we're going to stand up to the Sask Party pretty darn quick here, Mr. Speaker, because we've had enough of this kind of treatment of seeing resources being hauled out of the North on crummy roads, Mr. Speaker, of seeing people being stuck on roads where they can't phone for help because there's no cellphone coverage.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of jobs in southern Saskatchewan that the northern economy helps create and helps maintain. People know that in the North. And all the northern people asked was one simple thing, was a bit of respect. Give us decent roads to travel on, safe roads to travel on. Give us decent services like housing. Give us decent services like training for our kids so we can be part of this economy.

But what does the Sask Party do? They turned their backs. They turned their backs on the northern people, and about the only reference that they make in their entire vocabulary in the last number of years since they've been elected was *The Northern Municipalities Act*. And what was it about? It was to dissolve smaller settlements and dissolve smaller hamlets, Mr. Speaker. That's an absolute shame. I concur with the member from Cumberland — it's an absolute shame.

And I would say this to the Sask Party: keep up that kind of treatment of northern Saskatchewan and there will be some trouble. And I don't know what that trouble is yet, but there's more and more anger. There's more and more anger towards how the northern people are being treated, Mr. Speaker, and

there's going to be a lot more action. I fear that many people are going to get angrier and angrier to the point where there will be some major problems. And I'm asking the Sask Party to recognize that today and do something to correct some of that anger and frustration that's out there.

So the manner in which you treated our trappers, the manner in which you treated our commercial fishing industry, the manner in which you're trying to kick out working people from their homes that they've lived in the last 18, 19 years . . . Because they got a job, now you want to kick them out of these homes. Well, Mr. Speaker, you keep that up as a Sask Party government; you're going to get a lot of frustrated people responding to you in a big, big way. In a big way. And it's not going to be a very positive way. And that's why I tell people in northern Saskatchewan, be patient. Be patient, because our time will come. Our time will come. And the continual disregard by the Sask Party to northern issues, there will be a price to pay, Mr. Speaker. And I can't take any guesses to what that will be, and I hope it's nothing major, Mr. Speaker. But the frustration is building, and people of the North are angry about this stuff. They're very, very angry.

And I can tell you right now that the minister gets up and talks about dissolving some of these northern governments, Mr. Speaker. Not a word of dissolving some of the smaller governments in the South. Not a word. You mention amalgamation to the Sask Party. They won't admit it, but they're doing it privately. But they'll never, ever say that in public. When it comes to the North, they're more than willing to say it, Mr. Speaker. And that's the crux of the problem is that the northern Saskatchewan people are not going to continue to sit by and take the grief from the Sask Party that they have over the last number of years. I think now, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to see a lot more people getting angrier and standing up and saying something, that there are coalitions being developed.

And you sit here today. You sit here today, and you hear the minister talk about New West Partnership. Well how does that impact Stony Rapids, the New West Partnership? Well guess what? Their New West Partnership deal implicates how Stony Rapids does business. Sled Lake, guess what? They've got to follow this New West Partnership deal that the Sask Party created. Well they don't have the resources to do that, Mr. Speaker. How are they going to resolve that as a small community? They don't have the resources.

So you have this New West Partnership that absolutely nobody really wanted, and there are so many problems with that partnership. And one of the biggest things now is that anything over a specified amount on a New West Partnership — it doesn't matter if you're a municipal partner — you've got to advertise that.

Well I can't see Missinipe being able to, you know, being able to do that. Say they have to replace a fire truck. Well guess what? If they've got to go advertise right across Western Canada because that's the provision under the New West Partnership, well they don't have the resources. They don't have the means to do that. But do you know what's going to happen? The Sask Party is going to instruct their municipal advisers, anybody that has anything over 50,000 — I think that's the figure — you will now advertise that across Western

Canada under a New West Partnership. And guess what? The hamlet or the settlement will pay that. They'll pay that cost. They'll pay the advertising. They'll pay the outreach.

That's exactly my point, Mr. Speaker, is the contrary actions of the Sask Party under the notion of growing this province. It's striking, the fact that they have not . . . don't have an idea what they're doing. And yet people, whether it's a northern hamlet or a large city, they seem to make things happen and do things properly, but these guys across the way don't have a clue as to how to get it done.

So how does this work? You throw a growth strategy under the northern Act. You throw a New West Partnership under the termination of some of the hamlets and settlements in northern Saskatchewan. And why doesn't that fit? Why doesn't it fit? It just seems this doesn't fit very well, Mr. Speaker. So my point is, you know, is to the minister, you've got to start paying attention to northern Saskatchewan.

And the problem you have if you don't start paying attention to northern Saskatchewan except through provisions and bills of this sort, what's going to happen is that people of the North are going to start spreading that anger, not just to the Sask Party government, but they're going to start spreading that anger to resource companies that are working in the North whether it be Cameco or Areva or some of the larger centres. They're going to be painted the same brush as the Sask Party, and I can almost guarantee you that the Camecos and the Arevas and some of the forestry companies don't want to be tied at all to the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to be tied at all.

And that's the point when it comes from northern Saskatchewan issues. They better start resolving those problems or the problem is the North is going to start standing up and who'll be implicated in the poor governance of the Sask Party is resource companies that are operating in northern Saskatchewan.

We know that day is coming. Me and the member from Cumberland know very well the mood and the position that many northern people are taking. And the more and more disregard and disrespect that the Sask Party shows the North, the more and more the fact that all they want out of the North are the resources and not putting nothing back, all they want out of the North is to be able to dissolve smaller settlements and smaller hamlets as their action plan for the North, well, Mr. Speaker, that kind of disregard and disrespect will not go unnoticed and it will not go unpunished, Mr. Speaker. And that's why the people of the North look at this Sask Party government and shake their head in utter belief because they know they don't have a clue what to do about the economy, the Sask Party doesn't. And the people of the North are just embarrassed by this government and they're angry about their disrespect toward northern Saskatchewan people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned at the outset, mining companies know full well the anger and the mood of people in northern Saskatchewan. They know full well. And you look at some of the bills that the minister's bringing forward, Bill 75. Why would you attach Bill 75 and the intent to dissolve some of these smaller settlements and hamlets to your growth strategy? Like where is the sense there? And this is where we in

opposition, we implore the minister, read your files. You can't on one hand talk about growth strategy and then turn around and say, but we're allowing provisions to dissolve some of these northern communities.

Well who has the authority, Mr. Speaker? He has the authority because many times he's considered the ex officio mayor from some of these smaller settlements and some of these smaller hamlets. So what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that he can arbitrarily dissolve some of these communities. And is that another slap in the face to northern Saskatchewan people? I think absolutely it is. It absolutely is.

So you look at some of these mines. You look at some of these mines. One doesn't have to be a genius to figure out what they extract out of northern Saskatchewan from one mine site, from one industry. And I'll give you a good example, Mr. Speaker. In Key Lake they load up yellowcake in the 45-gallon drum containers. And that yellowcake is not really filled right to the top, but yellowcake is placed in these special drums. Those drums are loaded onto a semi. And of course the semi takes them from the mine site because Key Lake does all the processing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that one drum itself, 45-gallon drum of yellowcake, that's not full. I think the value of that drum is about \$65,000 just the contents themselves. And sometimes they'll haul out two or three semis, a couple of semis a day. And, Mr. Speaker, you can imagine the value of that yellowcake coming out of one mine, out of one industry, one mine. How much, how much money is being pulled out of northern Saskatchewan? We estimate there's billions of dollars every year at least. From that one mine, has got to be close to \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker.

So what happens? What are the northern people asking for? One mine, one industry, one example — \$1 billion a year. What do the northern people want? They don't want a special deal. They want to work at the mine. They want to have their kids trained to be able to work at some of the other industries. They want respect for their land. And they want decent, safe highways and services like cellphones and decent housing for their people. It's not a huge ask, Mr. Speaker.

But what happens? This government totally ignores these northern issues and they ignore the northern issues and they ignore the northern issues on a continual basis. The Minister of Highways sent me a sheet of all the work he's doing in Highways. And I looked at that sheet and, Mr. Speaker, I think half the work hasn't been done yet. And I can almost guarantee you, half the contractors on that spreadsheet that he sent me haven't been paid. There's a big holdback on many of the contractors' income. But what's worse is half the province was off that worksheet, and that part was northern Saskatchewan. Northern Saskatchewan was completely off the Department of Highways worksheet in terms of identifying where the work was being done for highway improvement.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll give you a good example of what I mean by working for northern Saskatchewan and some of these bills that are brought up. When Calvert was the premier of Saskatchewan, we had a lot of discussion on roadwork. We had a lot of discussion because when the economy started building

under Calvert, the key thing is Romanow brought our province back from bankruptcy created by the Conservatives across the way. Calvert started building the economy and, Mr. Speaker, things were really happening.

And one day we had a discussion on Highway No. 1, the Trans-Canada Highway. And Calvert wanted some action on that highway. And I was the minister at the time, just a newly minted Minister of Highways. And he come along, and I can tell you right now that we spent more money on Highway No. 1 in the four or five years that Calvert was the premier than the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker.

And the words that Calvert said is that we govern for all of Saskatchewan, is what he told our entire cabinet. We will govern for all of Saskatchewan. We're not going to go to pockets of support because that does not denote leadership, is what he said. The important thing is that as premier at the time, Mr. Speaker, Calvert made very clear to his entire cabinet that we governed for all of Saskatchewan. And that means southeastern Saskatchewan as well as northwestern Saskatchewan. That means the cities. That means the rural areas. That means every part of this province.

And today now, Mr. Speaker, we see from the Sask Party no respect for a number of areas. No respect for a number of areas, and northern Saskatchewan being one of them, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll go back to the earlier statement, that a lot of time and a lot of effort was put in place to support the Trans-Canada Highway. And much of that money came from the NDP, Mr. Speaker, because it was the right thing to do. There was safety issues. There was major problems. And the NDP moved on that file, even though we traditionally don't do well in that area, Mr. Speaker. Even though we don't do well in that area, we put major investment in that area because it was the right thing to do. And, Mr. Speaker, we don't see any evidence of that whatsoever from the Sask Party in terms of being fair.

[16:00]

So the message is, you govern for all of Saskatchewan. You stop treating certain sectors of our province in a negative way because that's going to have consequences. And we're already seeing evidence of that. And the least you can do is not bring up your silly growth strategy language when you talk about dissolving northern communities because that just does not fit in any way, shape, or form.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's tons of examples of how people in the North are simply fed up with this government, and they aren't going to take it anymore. I'm not kidding. I'm telling the Sask Party, this is going to be a problem and it's going to be a problem fairly soon. So you better start waking up to the fact that if the only reference you're going to make to the northern Saskatchewan is through silly bills like Bill 75 to amalgamate some of the smaller communities, then you're asking for a heap more problems and a heap more trouble. And you're going to get it.

Now northern Saskatchewan people, as I said at the outset, said they don't want a special deal. They just want fairness. They want consistency and they want what every Saskatchewan

resident has, Mr. Speaker. At times they want to have decent, safe highways. They want to have access to health care. They want to have services like training, like cellphone use. These are some of the things that people in everyday walks of life take for granted. Well the northern Saskatchewan people wouldn't mind doing that as well.

And the other thing that people of Saskatchewan want, Mr. Speaker, is they want a decent government. And, Mr. Speaker, they are not getting it whatsoever from the Sask Party, and those days of the Sask Party rule are coming to an end, Mr. Speaker. We know that. We know that. And I think many people in the front bench know that as well. And as much as some of them may smile, Mr. Speaker, there is a process called elections. And as much as they try and gerrymander the process, the people of Saskatchewan will, will sooner — and I hope it's a lot sooner — will get rid of this Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. Sooner than 2015 because I think there's going to be a lot of trouble on the horizon. And once the honeymoon is over, once the honeymoon is over, guess what, Mr. Speaker? They go from heroes to zeros in a heart beat. And that happens in politics, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to happen again.

My bit of advice on Bill 75, Mr. Speaker, is the North is going to rise up. There are going to be a bunch of people that are going to get very angry. And they've had enough of being pushed around. They sincerely do. And as long as they talk about dissolution of smaller communities in the North, and that's the only language they understand over there, Mr. Speaker, then I think the northern people are going to rise up and teach them a new language. And that language is responsibility.

And the second message is you govern for all of Saskatchewan, including northern Saskatchewan, the same lesson that Calvert taught many of us in cabinet when we spend money and tons of money on all parts of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at a leader like Calvert, who really built this economy, we know on this side of the House . . . And history will judge us, history will judge the NDP under Romanow and under Calvert, not the Sask Party. And they will realize quickly enough that the NDP provided some very critical leadership, that the NDP ushered in a resource opportunity for Saskatchewan, for many people throughout the country, if not the world. And Calvert brought in many, many companies. And we started seeing the economy chugging along, Mr. Speaker, and then it was starting to hum.

And then all of sudden the election was called and now the Sask Party are jumping from their homes and saying, look what we've done. And the entire population of Saskatchewan has a collective laugh because so far they have marketed the fact that they claim they've done this. They claim that they've done this, built this economy. And I can tell the Saskatchewan people there has never been a right wing government in the history of Saskatchewan politics that has ever been successful at creating a booming economy and a great province. It's always been under an NDP rule. And, Mr. Speaker, that applies to 2012 and beyond, Mr. Speaker, because the fact of the matter is the right wingers over there don't have the skill set nor the mindset, and they simply don't know what they're doing.

So on that point, Mr. Speaker, on this particular bill, we're going to pay very close attention to Bill 75 because if there is any effort and any plan to undermine the economy, control and actions and authority of some northern municipal governments by trying to dissolve them, Mr. Speaker, that's going to add further fuel to the fire, further fuel to the fire. Because I think what they're trying to do is again suck out as much money out of the North as they can. And some of the activity they might do is dissolving some of these northern communities so they can pull out 60 or 70,000 out of the northern fund, so they can come and try and balance their books on the back of some of these smaller northern communities because we've seen evidence today that this government is broke.

So they're half a billion dollars off their projection, one more billion dollars in debt. They were 2 billion off their potash projections two years ago, Mr. Speaker, and I think the people of Saskatchewan have seen this before. They've been down this path before, and they say this conservative government is back. And now what you need to do is get rid of them once again. Get rid of them and send them packing, Mr. Speaker, and that opportunity will come forth fairly soon.

So on that point, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Assembly, I tell every New Democrat, every progressive-thinking person out there, and all the people that have been enamoured and fooled by the Sask Party so far is they have betrayed the trust of the Saskatchewan people. They're making a mess of many things. We in the opposition are going to continue to fight and fight hard. We want to get rid of these guys because they don't know what they're doing. We need your help. We'll continue fighting. We'll continue clawing our way back.

And, Mr. Speaker, that process begins when we elect a new leader in March and we start rebuilding our team. And I'll be reaching to the people who want to run for the Saskatchewan New Democrats so we can build a greater province, a province that will last, not a province that'll sell Crowns and that'll compromise the environment or go to war with our working men and women, much like the Sask Party is doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, a lot of issues under *The Northern Municipalities Act* that we want to cover. It's all connected. It's all important. And I can say today that any bill that the government wants to bring forward about northern communities, me and the member from Cumberland will be paying very close attention. Because we simply don't trust these guys, and above all else, we want to get rid of them, Mr. Speaker. And the best way to do it is keep fighting them. And the reason why I want to get rid of them, they simply don't know what they're doing.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I want to adjourn debate on Bill 75.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The member from Athabasca has moved adjourned debate on Bill 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Carried.

Bill No. 76 — *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*. *The Municipal Board Act* establishes the Saskatchewan Municipal Board and provides the framework through which it undertakes its responsibilities related to the approval, oversight, and adjudication of a variety of municipal governance matters.

The amendments proposed in the bill address two general areas. First, they will improve the SMB's processes and abilities related to municipal boundary alteration applications or annexations where the municipalities involved cannot reach agreement. These amendments are made in conjunction with other changes respecting annexations in the three municipal Acts. Second, the bill will respond to requests from the board and the ministry to update provisions regarding the appointment of part-time members, members' pension plans, to correct and clarify wording and remove outdated references.

I'll briefly touch on how the amendments proposed in this bill accomplish this. In terms of municipal boundary alterations or annexations, the ministry conducted a review of the process for resolving annexation disputes between municipalities, consulted extensively with the SMB and the municipal sector, and identified several changes to the process to make it work better.

I want to point out that by far the majority — approximately 88 per cent of boundary alteration applications — are straightforward, are agreed to by both municipal councils, and do not come to the SMB. We encourage councils to continue to resolve issues on their own. Occasionally, however, the affected councils reach an impasse which results in no agreement, and the applications then go the SMB for decision.

The amendments in this bill relate to that part of the annexation process after an application reaches the Municipal Board for a decision. The amendments improve this part of the process in the following ways: first, it will clarify the board secretary's ability to determine the completeness of applications and to notify applicants of deficiencies before it may be considered by the board. This will speed up the process and save the board's time for higher priority questions. This bill also ensures that councils undertake mediation to settle the dispute if none has been attempted prior to the SMB's review and decision. The premise is that a voluntary settlement, even with the assistance of a mediator, is preferable to having the SMB impose a decision.

Mr. Speaker, the changes in this bill also include providing clear authority for the SMB to approve a portion or portions of an application. This change from an all-or-nothing approach means the board can find and approve compromises and solve at least part of the issue. As well, amendments are proposed to provide more flexibility in the appointment of alternate part-time members representing SARM and SUMA to sit on the panel that reviews and holds hearings regarding municipal boundary change applications. This is intended to address issues respecting the availability of these members in potential

situations where the member's municipality is a party to or affected by an application.

These amendments I just mentioned support other amendments being proposed to the three municipal Acts related to the boundary alteration application process that are also being introduced this session. Together these changes will encourage municipalities to work co-operatively to resolve issues and balance competing interests in order to promote and support the growth and development occurring in and around our communities.

The other amendments in this bill respond to requests from the board and the ministry to update the Act. These include enabling the appointment of part-time members by the minister. Full-time members will continue to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Part-time members will still be subject to the same membership qualifications that are set in regulations, allowing newly appointed board members to continue to contribute to pension plans in which they were previously enrolled such as municipal pension plans. The purpose of this change is to support the continued recruitment of board members from the local government sector. These are individuals who have acquired extensive experience, are relatively senior and well along in their careers, and who are in the best position to contribute to the board's work without disrupting their pension arrangements from their local government careers.

Also altering requirements to publish SMB orders in the *Gazette* from two publications to one publication, consistent with other Acts, and removing references to repealed legislation and discontinued board functions.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry has consulted extensively on the changes in this bill with the SMB and the municipal sector. Consultations occurred in 2011 on recommendations from the ministry's review of the boundary alteration process. Further consultations were conducted with the SMB during 2012 on the amendments. The board is supportive of these proposed amendments.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the amendments in this bill respond to improvements identified by the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, the municipal sector, and the ministry to make the boundary alteration process work better. They support the government's growth plan and also provide more flexibility for the board both in terms of its decision-making abilities and in terms of recruiting new members.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*. Is the Assembly ready . . . I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to once again stand today on behalf of the official opposition and offer our first look and our analysis of Bill 76. And, Mr. Speaker, if I'm correct in listening to what's being proposed here, is that there is going to be some mediation on

some municipal boundary arguments or discussion that may occur under the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the fact that there's 88 per cent, I think was the figure he used, that most of the time that if there is a discussion or dispute in relation to a boundary of a municipal government, that generally it's all kind of spoken out and people are generally co-operative and there's usually not a big problem. But there are instances, Mr. Speaker, as the minister alluded to, that there may be some dispute.

So what's happened is there's a couple points that I picked up on during his presentation. One is that the secretary responsible for the board, I think he said secretary, that she would be able to go through applications and determine whether they are completed or whether they're properly filled out or whether the proper process was followed, and that if they're not then she wouldn't let it proceed to the board level.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming that there has got to be a lot more professionalism out there that would make sure that applications for amalgamation or taking over a certain boundary of another jurisdiction, that people out there know how to fill these forms out properly. Now the question I have is that is there isn't the, if that's not the case, that if there is a lot of people that are not filling out these forms properly to allow for their application to go to the board, then we need to know what kind of a percentage of the applications is problematic. You know, like and that's the point that I would make is that the secretary now has that ability to be able to determine which package is complete and which one is not.

[16:15]

Now how big of a problem is that, Mr. Speaker? We don't know. And what we do know, according to the minister, is that 88 per cent of the applications do come to the board and they're usually handled and there may be some argument, but overall, there's some success on 88 per cent of them. But of those 88 per cent, how many of them have come to the board before and not properly filled out these forms? We don't know that information and that would be nice to know, Mr. Speaker.

So what I want to say is that it may be logical to have the secretary be able to vet through these applications so the board isn't consumed with applications that aren't completely filled out, but is it going to solve that problem? That's the real question, Mr. Speaker, that I have.

The other issue that he raised, Mr. Speaker, was that if there is a dispute between somebody who wanted to annex a certain property and another group that may not want to have that occur — because that happens in Saskatchewan — then this Municipal Board can make a decision, but if it becomes too confusing, too conflicting, too problematic for the board to make a decision after the application has been deemed to be filled out properly by the administrator, then there is mediation that would be the next course of action for the application.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question that we have in the opposition is, who does the mediating in terms of resolving a conflict when one party wants to annex another party's property? And is it a judge? Is it a professional person that does all this kind of

work? Is it anybody within the government employ? Like how generally is the process . . . [inaudible] . . . and who selects the mediators? Is it the province or is it the board?

Because it's really important to know that some of these applications that may occur from time to time, that if there is a huge dispute, then you go to the mediator and it depends who appointed that mediator. Sometimes that has a direct impact on the outcome of the mediator's choice of which person that they want to support. And that's my point is that we need to find out in greater detail, mediation with whom? Like who do you . . . How does the process work? And I think that's important for the Saskatchewan public and the Saskatchewan people to know clearly how that works.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Municipal Board, the comment about the continuation of a pension plan because they had received it before. Certainly from our perspective we look at the pension plan, the value of a pension plan as something that we would certainly support, and that we would explain to people — the working men and women of our province — that this, having a pension plan at work, is really important and that we ought to take some time to understand how this works and to make sure that your perspective as an employee is to look at your employ for a long time so that when you do reach the age of retirement that you actually do have the necessary means to sustain your lifestyle.

So I think that's something that's really, really important, Mr. Speaker, is that if the Municipal Board and some of the contents of Bill 76 is to strengthen that process whereas employees are protected by ways of a pension plan and that there is a seamless process in place and that this certainly protects the employees as best we can, or as best as possible, then it's something that the official opposition can certainly support.

So, Mr. Speaker, at the first blush there is a lot of questions and there's a lot of issues that we potentially see that could be concerning. And some of these steps in these processes . . . As I indicated, there is the inference that this could possibly lead to some amalgamation of some of the RMs because I see that in all the language here today, Mr. Speaker. And that's the important thing is that if the Sask Party is planning to amalgamate . . . And this is another tool that they would have at their disposal called a Saskatchewan Municipal Board, and that any dispute mechanism is in terms of annexing of land from one RM to another, that there will be a mediation process in place and that people will have to abide by that. So we look at all these issues and all these problems that could be created as a result of this bill and the potential harm that could come to some of the RMs or the towns, and some of the impacted choices and the decisions of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. Certainly it merits more and more attention and more and more discussion. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 76.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I'm going to call the question on the adjournment. All those in favour of adjourning the House, please say aye . . . Adjourning debate, sorry. Sorry, adjourning debate on Bill 76.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — All those opposed?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — The ayes have it.

Bill No. 79 — *The Representation Act, 2012*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill 79, *The Representation Act, 2012*. Mr. Speaker, this bill is the final step in the process of establishing new constituency boundaries in Saskatchewan. These boundaries are based on the most recent decennial census data. The Legislative Assembly now has passed a resolution adopting, without amendment, the boundaries proposed in the report of the Constituency Boundaries Commission. *The Constituency Boundaries Act, 1993* now requires me, as the minister responsible, to introduce *The Representation Act, 2012* in the same session of the Legislative Assembly to establish the new provincial constituencies as directed by that resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the Constituency Boundaries Commission was established on April 18, 2012. The commission was composed of the Hon. Mr. Justice Neil Gabrielson as chairperson with Mr. Stuart Pollon and Mr. Harry Van Mulligen also serving as members. The commission's first meeting was held May 1, 2012, and their deliberations continued until early October. As required by *The Constituency Boundaries Act*, the commission completed an interim report, then it held a series of public hearings across the province in September. The commission also considered written submissions before preparing its final report.

The commission states in its report that in undertaking its work it was guided by the requirements of the Act, relevant decisions of the court, and by common sense.

The Constituencies Boundaries Act, 1993 requires that:

In determining the area to be included in a proposed constituency south of the dividing line and in fixing the boundaries of that constituency, a commission shall ensure that the population of each proposed constituency is, as nearly as possible, equal to the population quotient.

The constituency population quotient is the total population minus the northern population divided by the 59 ridings. The total population is defined as the voting eligible population that is 18 years of age or older. We are advised in the report that the constituency population quotient for these purposes was determined to be 13,059.

Having established this central principle, the Act then allows the commission to depart from this requirement where, in its opinion, it is necessary to do so because of:

special geographic considerations, including:

sparsity, density, or relative rates of growth of the population in various regions . . .

accessibility to the regions . . . or

the size and shape of the regions . . .

a special community of interests or diversity of interests of persons residing in regions . . . or

physical features of regions . . .

Finally, the Act provides that in any event a commission shall ensure that the population of each constituency south of the dividing line remains within 5 per cent, more or less, of the constituency population quotient.

Mr. Speaker, in compliance with these rules and with what I am sure was a healthy dose of common sense, the commission has achieved the creation of 61 constituencies. Their boundaries will ensure that the value of each vote by a Saskatchewan voter will be as nearly as possible equal, no matter where the vote is cast.

Mr. Speaker, for good reason the two northern constituencies continue to operate under special rules. Those rules recognize the lower population density and vast distances involved in those constituencies. However, the remaining 59 constituencies will now have the same number of actual voters, plus or minus 5 per cent, in accordance with the recently amended Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's a fundamental principle of our democracy that each vote should be of roughly the same value throughout the province. In Saskatchewan we have a permitted size variance of plus or minus 5 per cent between constituencies. This is one of the lowest in Canada. However, it is our view that to ensure votes of equal value in Saskatchewan, it is the number of eligible voters in the constituency that should be established as roughly equal rather than the overall population.

Mr. Speaker, it is the voters who elect the members of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore in our view it is the voters who should be the focus of constituency boundaries process. The final report of this bill reflects that.

The other change reflected in the final report and now the bill, is the increase in the number of constituencies from 58 to 61. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has been enjoying a significant growth over the past several years. Since the census on which the current boundaries were based, our population has increased over 5 per cent. We are proud to say that this dramatic increase is continuing.

Our government's view is that this process must reflect the increase in population since the boundaries were last drawn. It should also anticipate the population growth that we are confident will occur before the next commission is established following the 2021 census.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, the Act was amended to recognize the population change in Saskatchewan by increasing the number of constituencies from 58 to 61. A 5 per cent increase in the number of seats was achieved by adding three

constituencies south of the dividing line as that term is defined in the Act.

I would note that there was absolutely no direction provided in the legislation as to where these three new constituencies were to be situated. This was left for the independent Boundaries Commission to determine. Their final report has now set those boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, these new boundaries will come into force on the dissolution of the current Legislative Assembly prior to the next provincial general election.

Mr. Speaker, the independent constituencies Boundary Commission led by the Honourable Mr. Justice Neil Gabrielson has served this Assembly and the people of this province exceedingly well. They have listened carefully to the people of this province and have worked quickly and diligently to execute their duties on our behalf. I thank them again for their service to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 79, *The Representation Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 79, *The Representation Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to . . . I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Here we go again on three more politicians for this great hallowed hall of democracy, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say first of all, Mr. Speaker, that the commission that undertook this work, I have no doubt that the commission probably worked very hard. And I understand that they may have some parameters in which they had to work on. And there's no question in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that the commission member, the committee members were probably very important, very professional, and very thorough in their work.

So I don't think we want to focus at all on the actual commission or the committee members, Mr. Speaker. Because certainly from our perspective, they undertook this work, and it's important that we recognize some of that effort and all the while knowing that they had some rules and regulations, and they had some hoops that they had to go through. But nonetheless I think that the commission done some very good work.

But the crux of the problem and the real root of the problem, Mr. Speaker, is the Sask Party didn't ask the people of Saskatchewan for the mandate to employ three more politicians. Mr. Speaker, they didn't ask the Sask Party candidates in the last election to come along and get three more MLAs, Mr. Speaker. Not one Saskatchewan Party candidate went to the steps of the people that they were visiting, and I don't care who it is, if they walk in there and say, guess what we're going to do if we get elected? We're going to add three more politicians. And, Mr. Speaker, I dare any one of them to say that they have said that to their constituents in the last campaign, Mr. Speaker. And the answer, absolutely not, not one of them mentioned this, Mr. Speaker. Not one single Sask Party MLA got the mandate from the people of Saskatchewan to add more politicians.

And, Mr. Speaker, what did they do today? What should have happened, Mr. Speaker, is they should have told people the absolute, bare truth during the last campaign by telling them, we're going to add more MLAs. And, Mr. Speaker, they never did. They never did. You know why? Because they would have got at least 10, 15 of them trounced out of their seats, and they would have been locked out of homes, Mr. Speaker. They would have been locked out of yards. They would have been locked out of communities. If the premise of their presentation was, as a Sask Party MLA, we're going to hire more politicians, if they would have said that . . . And I challenge any one of them to say, yes, I did tell my constituents that because they know that's absolutely not true. Not true at all, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

Because I can tell you right now, the people of Saskatchewan would take you in the back of the woodshed, and they'd teach you a very valuable lesson of integrity. And they'd teach you a very valuable lesson of how not to try and fool the people of Saskatchewan. Nobody, nobody — no organization, not one group, not any organization that I'm aware of in the history of Saskatchewan that has any bearing in Saskatchewan — went to the Sask Party and asked the Sask Party, put more politicians in place. I don't think any organization — and we see a lot of organizations over the years that come visit in this Assembly — and not one organization said to the Sask Party, add more MLAs. Add more MLAs — not one — at a cost of millions of dollars.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the Sask Party done was they fired a bunch of workers. And they fired a lot of workers, people that have given their lives and their educational efforts to serving the people of Saskatchewan. And they fired them. And they're going after 20 per cent, 15 per cent. They're just going on and on, firing people and transferring people and letting hard-working citizens of Saskatchewan go because that's just the mean-spirited nature of the Sask Party.

And what did they do after they fired all those people, Mr. Speaker? They added more MLAs in their Assembly. And we sat here, and we just couldn't believe it. We were absolutely astonished that they would bring more MLAs as a result of this particular bill, Bill 79. And we sat here and say, how ludicrous is that? How silly is that? And how totally out of touch is that plan to add more MLAs when you're busy firing highways workers, when you're busy firing health care workers, when you're busy firing people that have served the community for years, Mr. Speaker? When you're asking the working men and women to do a lean, a lean program is what they call it. You'll fire them without provocation and you fire them without thought about the impacts of your choice. And then you turn around and say, but we're going to hire and get more MLAs.

Where in your plan did you identify, in your platform or your radio ads, that you're going to hire more MLAs? And, Mr. Speaker, not a peep, not a single word from the Sask Party on the doorstep, in the newspapers or the radio ads or their billboards. Not a single mention of adding three more MLAs.

And I can tell you from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, I say shame on them. I say shame on them for two things. Number one is doing something that they didn't advise the people of

Saskatchewan. And number two is that they're doing this for a specific reason: to try and gerrymander a next election in their favour, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the reasons why they put some rules in like not counting the children of our province in the census, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the distribution of those seats are fair and thorough, Mr. Speaker. Those are some of the problems I think the Saskatchewan Party's going to have.

And the cost of adding more MLAs over time, Mr. Speaker, is millions of dollars. And I can tell you the people of Saskatchewan would much rather have somebody driving a truck to clear the roads in the middle of a winter storm than having somebody sit here in the Assembly and talk about how valuable the Sask Party is in terms of adding more MLAs, Mr. Speaker. They want more politicians, the Sask Party, at a cost of thousands if not millions of dollars. Is that your priority?

When you have youth suicide in northern Saskatchewan at an alarming rate. You have child care space problems. You have issues of social housing. You have issues of trying to make sure that the economy keeps moving along all the work that is necessary. Mr. Speaker, what does the Sask Party prioritize in terms of their mandate and their shining moment? They want to add more MLAs. Now where in the heck did that come from, Mr. Speaker? Where did it come from? Who asked for that? Who asked for that, Mr. Speaker? Nobody asked for it. Nobody asked for it.

I don't care how much the member from Moose Jaw yells, Mr. Speaker. That's about the only time we hear the member from Moose Jaw North speak here. Well there's a couple of times we hear him speak, Mr. Speaker, when he gets up and says yea or nay on a vote, or when he jumps up when he needs to say something because he hasn't said anything in three months here. I think what's really important, Mr. Speaker, is . . . I would suggest to that member is to turn back on your laptop, get back to your cartoons because that's probably the best place and most productive amount of time that you can spend in this Assembly as opposed, as opposed to standing up and voting for more politicians.

Where did that come from, Mr. Speaker? Why are you adding more politicians? Who asked you to add three more MLAs? No group in Saskatchewan. Not one Sask Party MLA asked the constituents about his mandate. And that's why I say shame, shame on them for doing this. Shame. There's more issues in Melfort. There's more issues in Shellbrook. There's more issues even in Kindersley. And what do they do? We're going to add more MLAs.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I sit in this Assembly today and I can tell you, we don't need more MLAs. We need more highways workers. We need more people working in the health care field. We need more people that are going to help build this economy. We don't need more politicians in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We have enough. And the reason why we don't need any more, Mr. Speaker, is I looked at their backbench and there's about 30 of them that don't do anything here anyway except vote yea or nay.

So the point I would point out, Mr. Speaker, is that nobody, nobody asked the Sask Party to put in more MLAs. Nobody whatsoever. And no group that I'm ever aware of ever came to

the Assembly and told the Sask Party, one of the pressing things that you should do is add more politicians. And where did that come from, Mr. Speaker? Where did that come from?

And today now, today now you go back to Moose Jaw and they're shutting down Valley View Centre. They're shutting down Valley View Centre, and they're not putting any plan in place to accommodate the population there. There's no bridge being built, no bridge being built in P.A. because these guys are broke. These guys are broke. You have stories of homeless people, people being kicked out of their homes in Meadow Lake. And the member from Meadow Lake's pretty quiet over there.

So you have all these issues, Mr. Speaker, and about all the Sask Party can do today is, but, but we're adding more politicians. That's their response to the crises out there, and that's where their priority is. So people say, okay, add more politicians. Add more politicians. Add more politicians is what the Sask Party is saying. Then our argument is, why did you discount the children in allocating those seats? Because, Mr. Speaker, they're trying to gerrymander the politicians or gerrymander the process, the political process. They're trying to gerrymander the political process.

And I say to them today, Mr. Speaker, as they sit by their fireplace and when they're much older than they are now and they're carrying their grandchild — this is what's important — and their grandchild will ask one of those members, why did you do that? Why did you do that? And why did you get this Gerry Mander guy to do that? You know, and the grandchild will ask one of them.

And of course one of them will respond, my dear child, Gerry Mander is not a person. Gerrymander is a process that the right wingers use when they're threatened by a thing called democracy, Mr. Speaker. That's what gerrymander is. And that poor child will be confused, Mr. Speaker. The poor child will be confused and then say, why would you do that? They'll ask their grandparent, why would you gerrymander a process for your own benefit? Why would you put rules and regulations in to gerrymander the process? Why would you do that?

And I go back to my earlier statement. That's what right wingers do when they're panicked by a thing called democracy, Mr. Speaker. We see it in Ottawa and now we're seeing it here in Saskatchewan, compliments of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker.

So once again you sit here and we tell people over and over again, over and over again, which one of the Sask Party candidates, which one of the Sask Party candidates knocked on a doorstep and said or knocked on a doorway and said, we are going to hire three more politicians? Not one single one of them did that. And, Mr. Speaker, not one, not one. And the worst part is today, today they're still sitting on their hands not saying a word, Mr. Speaker. They're not saying a word even though they know they're doing this. They're sitting there saying, well don't look at us; we're just the backbench. We're just the backbench. Our job is to say yea or nay when we're told to say yea or nay. So don't look at us.

But the question you've got to ask is, which one of you guys

campaigned on that? And I can tell you right now, not one single Sask Party MLA campaigned on that because they know the people of Saskatchewan would have given them their very candid opinion on what they thought of that plan, Mr. Speaker. But a year later they're trying to slip it through here at the Assembly, to try and hope nobody's watching this during a busy Christmas season. That's the strategy. Everybody knows that.

You know, so the whole process is that, quite frankly, from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, this whole process and this whole bill stinks, Mr. Speaker. That's the bottom line. It absolutely reeks. And I know that the new Minister of Justice has got this file in front of him, Mr. Speaker. He got it from the previous minister of Justice.

And I said this at the outset when the previous minister introduced this file, when he introduced this file, what makes the file really problematic for many of the thinking public, the people that really watch what's going on is that you've seen evidence of how they are going to make sure people that don't have photo ID [identification], photo ID when they come to vote — well, Mr. Speaker, that eliminates a lot of the NDP base, people that are older, the Aboriginal community, the immigrant community, people that may not have a driver's licence — they're trying to do these voting suppression tricks.

So they done some of that through some of their election bills, Mr. Speaker. That's what conservatives do, Mr. Speaker. And again, between the voter suppression and the mixed dates for the election and now adding more politicians, what the heck is that all about? That's the bottom line that people are asking, Mr. Speaker. And as I mentioned and I go through all these bills, and I go through all these bills and it's not a political minister that is doing this, Mr. Speaker. The worst insult to injury, the worst assault on democracy, the more salt put in this wound, Mr. Speaker, is that it's the Minister of Justice that's advocating some of these bills. Not the current minister, but certainly the past minister led this charge, the member from Saskatoon northeast, whatever. And now it's the current MLA that's acting as the minister. Now he has to carry the can and he has to defend this bill.

But I ask this question as you're sitting at home with your own families, with your own families. I'll ask him, do you think it's a good idea to have three more MLAs? And I can almost guarantee you that most of the Sask Party family members would say no, we don't think that's a good idea. There's better use of money, better use of resources, better use of this place, this hall of democracy, than trying to gerrymander the process, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly, that's exactly what we in the NDP say is wrong about the Sask Party. They're wrong. It's all about manipulation. It's all about voter suppression tactics. It's all about trying to gerrymander the electoral process. It's all about manipulation, control. And, Mr. Speaker, they never had the mandate to begin with to ask the people of Saskatchewan if they could add more MLAs.

And today I challenge them. Let's do a survey. Let's do a survey on how many people in Saskatchewan would like to see more MLAs. Let's do it in Melfort. Let's do it in Melfort, and the member from Melfort will be pretty quiet. He would probably get up and say nay, Mr. Speaker. He won't want, he

won't want the survey results at all, Mr. Speaker. So they can chirp from their chairs, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is they never got the mandate from the people of Saskatchewan to add more MLAs.

And, Mr. Speaker, I challenge him today to say, let's do a survey in my constituency to see who wants it, who wants more MLAs. And I bet you that gentleman will be the furthest away from the station where they're taking the surveys because he knows he'll be told, absolutely not. The people of Saskatchewan think there are greater priorities out there than having more politicians, and they should actually punish the Sask Party for trying to gerrymander the political process through some of the bills that they have brought forward in this session.

So, Mr. Speaker, this bill is absolutely rife with problems. There's a song in all of our hearts, our democratic hearts, to tell the people of Saskatchewan from on top of the highest mountain of this province where there's many people listening, the Saskatchewan Party want to add more politicians. Who gave them the mandate to do that? Who asked them to do this? There's many other problems. Who asked them to do this? Not a single soul, Mr. Speaker, not a single organization, not a single person told them at the last election, you know what would be a great idea, Sask Party guy? Adding more politicians. Not one person. Not one person told the Sask Party or any of their candidates that whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

And that's how confident, that's how confident we are in the fact that this mandate to add more politicians is wrong. And the assumption that they have the people's support of Saskatchewan is way off, and the fact is they never got the permission. And you know why they didn't ask the people of Saskatchewan? Because the people of Saskatchewan would say, absolutely not. Shake your head. People don't want more politicians. They want more programs. They want more workers. And they want more intelligence from their government when it comes to issues of this nature.

[16:45]

So I challenge every one of them — they're sitting very quiet over there — you name me one person that would ask you guys for more politicians. And there's not one that you guys can mention. Not one single person within your constituency want an extra three MLAs in this Assembly, not one. And notice they're all very quiet. It must be bedtime over there for them — very, very quiet, very, very quiet, very, very quiet.

You know why they're quiet, Mr. Speaker? Because they're absolutely embarrassed on this bill. But their job is to stand up when this bill is called and say, yea or nay. Now don't mix it up, you guys. I know a lot of the backbenchers go home and they practise. Because there's only two words you've got to say in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. One of them is yea and the other is nay. Okay, so when you go home and make sure you get the Y and the N correct, because that's about all you've got to say on this bill. Because you didn't have nothing to say on the doorstep, nothing on the debate, nothing in your press releases, absolutely nothing on their billboards. And today now, Mr. Speaker, we're going to sit here and are going laugh our heads off when they get up and they say yea to this silly bill to add

more politicians.

We're going to see if any one of them have the courage to say, no, we don't need more politicians. But, Mr. Speaker, they won't because that's what right wingers do when they are afraid of a thing called democracy. They turn to their old friend, their great friend, gerrymander. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 79.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 79, *The Representation 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. 69

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. McMorris that **Bill No. 69** — *The Information Services Corporation Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to enter into debate as it relates to Bill No. 69, *An Act respecting Information Services Corporation* here this afternoon. This bill has come around at a time where we have a government that's scrambling for cash, has been on the hunt for cash, and has found it in one of our Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

This piece of legislation represents a historic broken promise to the people of the province on an asset that's important to the people of this province, of an asset that has value, that returns millions to our treasury, allows us to fund the many services that are so important to this province, and all of that being sold off in a very short-sighted manoeuvre by a government that is unwilling to be straight with Saskatchewan people about the true state of their finances and are doing all that they can to hold up and paint a financial picture that's anything but the reality of the budget at this current point in time.

We have such a great history in this province as it relates to Crown corporations, of Saskatchewan people and communities coming together, working together, looking at the challenges and opportunities of a given time and place, and putting together some solutions. And Crown corporations are but one example of that rich history in this province in responding to those challenges and opportunities, making sure that we're putting forward solutions that address challenges of a given time but also provide a certainty well into the future. And ISC is certainly an example of that.

Not only is ISC an important tool to the people of our province, to the land surveyors, to the businesses in this province. It's also an important tool by way of providing revenues back to the

province of Saskatchewan. I believe, was it over \$15 million this last year that directly provided to the people of this province, and \$15 million of a dividend to our budget? Something that this government's willing to forgo into perpetuity.

When you think of that, Mr. Speaker, maybe what could these dollars fund? Well they could be funding a bridge in Prince Albert. Or they could be funding the needed infrastructure and schools in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. Or we can move around the province looking at the pieces of infrastructure that's there. But I think Prince Albert is a very key one that we could be focusing on where right now this government's piecemealing it together, doing a rather low-budget fix, to a band-aid fix to infrastructure that's so vital by way of an artery to northern Saskatchewan, but also a vital artery for people that flow across a river, across a bridge, on a daily basis and are really placed at risk with the sort of band-aid, piecemeal approach that the government opposite is taking in repairing a infrastructure that's so vital to Prince Albert and so vital to an entire region.

And then I see how that directly relates to basically a government that is tying the hands of future governments, tying the hands of the public purse, that's hamstringing our future, that's preventing us from being as strong as we can be by selling off assets for which provide us control over our future, and that provide us revenues to fund the needed and important infrastructure, the important programs that will allow us to secure that future.

Fifteen million dollars last year, Mr. Speaker, is what ISC brought in for the people of Saskatchewan into our treasury. It ran a profit that was larger than that. And the opportunities abound for ISC to be able to expand its services and be able to expand its revenue stream by way of contracting with other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

And we have a government with blinders on that's put itself into a precarious financial position that's now looking at this short-sighted sell-off as a way to quickly get its hands on some cash to take care of short-term obligations. But certainly they're not looking to the long term. They're not looking to the future. And they're not thinking of future generations in doing so.

And you know, it reminds me in many ways of, you know, where in some cases a family may get into a tight financial circumstance and they start to scramble. And they're looking for cash, and pressures are upon them, and they start to liquidate assets in their home. And I guess this is why we have things like pawn shops, Mr. Speaker, here in many ways where all of a sudden an individual or a family in a tight financial position is forced to sell off the TV they acquired, Mr. Speaker, for cents on the dollar for what its actual value is because of a hard-pressed financial circumstance.

We have a government opposite that, you know, has presided over a period, a special period of economic times in this province by way of the resources that we have as a province, by way of the impressive hard work of Saskatchewan people who are always willing to roll up their sleeves and do their part in our province, and by way of the entrepreneurs in this province who take that risk, that calculated risk and that make the investments in our province.

And here we see at this point in time, within this time of tremendous opportunity, a time where in many ways what we as a province have by way of resources is in demand to the world, we have a government that's failed to capitalize on that, and by way of making the meaningful improvements that they must and should in the lives and communities of Saskatchewan people but have also failed to make improvements by way of our financial position as a province, by way of our public finances.

And now we see a government that is doing all it can to hold up its public relations line, this notion that they put forward that at the beginning of this year that they were going to balance the budget. And of course, Mr. Speaker, all the evidence suggests anything but that occurring. It suggests that this is another budget that's off track. And unfortunately this is the fourth in a row, Mr. Speaker, that seems to be directly in line with becoming another deficit for Saskatchewan people.

But instead of owning up, instead of being straight with Saskatchewan people, instead of sharing the true and fair state of our provincial finances, we see a government that's engaged in expensive spin. In fact this boastful approach of this government is something that I know many find tiresome. It was when they put up their ads right after the provincial budget — a provincial budget that wasn't balanced from the get-go when they punted \$100 million of public debt on to the universities, Mr. Speaker, when they had overly inflated their assumptions as it related to potash in this budget — and then they went around and pretended that they had a budget that they were bringing forward that was balanced.

And not only did they pretend that in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They then pretended that in communities across the province and engaged in a very costly, expensive game of budgetary spin. And we saw billboards go up all over this province that were funded with the taxpayers' money, with public money entrusted to those members opposite, to put billboards up to suggest something that defied the reality that was going on in this province, to suggest something that was certainly not fact, Mr. Speaker.

And now we see a government that is doing all it can to continue to paint that picture, Mr. Speaker, that they'd like to tell Saskatchewan people instead of levelling with Saskatchewan people, instead of being straight with Saskatchewan people and sharing the true and actual picture of our finances. So we're stuck here now with a government that's more interested in painting a picture, more interested in maintaining their expensive budgetary spin that they put on billboards all across this province with taxpayers' money.

And they're looking for every way they can to hold up that public relations line. And when we look to the liquidation, the fire sale of ISC, an asset that delivers important services to the people of this province and delivers millions and millions of dollars to the treasury of this province, \$15 million alone last year. And I'm being heckled by the Minister of Culture and Tourism and ... What's his ministry? ... [inaudible interjection] ... No, film. Is film still in his title? How is film still in his title because he's eliminated film? Good question. Because the point about the minister who heckles, I think still has film under his umbrella but of course he's the minister

who's presided over the elimination of the film industry in this province.

And what we're talking about right here is the sale of ISC, which gives to the province of Saskatchewan \$15 million a year. And we know that minister has dug his heels in, in a very ideological way and a very rigid way, and has killed a creative film industry in this province, the investment in this province, driven workers away from this province, when what was required was just over \$1 million a year. And, Mr. Speaker, this bill right here, Bill No. 69, the bill as it relates to Information Services Corporation and the fire sale, represents \$15 million to the people of Saskatchewan on an annual basis.

So again just to review, the minister who killed off the film industry, killed off a tax credit and an economy that cost our treasury \$1 billion a year, he dug his heels in here. But what the government is currently willing to kill off into perpetuity, into our future, into decades and generations forward, is something that's generated last year \$15 million a year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think with these sorts of revenues, we could more than be supporting a thriving film industry in this province. We could be inviting those workers that are leaving this province in his constituency as we speak, Mr. Speaker, and having them build their lives once again in this province. We can invite those individuals, those entrepreneurs to come back and place their investment in our province, an investment that's been chased away by that minister opposite and that government opposite.

So what it comes down to, Mr. Speaker, is that we see a government that has a budget that is off-track, a government that is scrambling and looking for solutions, a government that's been clearly on the hunt for cash. And we saw that. We recognized when they went out and had a review done, an assessment done by way of RBC [Royal Bank of Canada], what they did when they went through that RBC is in fact they had a specific quote in there that talked about that this, the potential privatization of that asset would ... Sorry. Ironically the Minister of Culture heckles loudly in a boisterous way across the floor. He's cultured, Mr. Speaker. But what I will say is that not only do we have lacking culture on that side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we also have lacking common sense, Mr. Speaker, when we have Bill No. 69 that now represents a fire sale of an asset that we, that we know to be important to the people of this province. And it's a broken promise, Mr. Speaker, it's a broken promise.

And I know the member that shouts across the floor, I believe he, I think he's the MLA for Northeast and he's also apparently the Minister for Culture, Mr. Speaker. Again I say a tad ironic with the boisterous exchange across the floor.

But I know that member when he went out on to doorsteps in his Northeast constituency there last year, he brought forward a platform, and I have it in front of me here, Mr. Speaker. And I've gone through that platform and I've looked through with great detail, and I haven't found a single mention of him being straight with Saskatchewan people that he was going to be selling off their assets. And in fact I don't see a single mention that he was going to be killing the film industry and driving some of those workers who were located in his riding outside of

this province. But he can yell across the floor, Mr. Speaker. I'd urge you be straight with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And that's where I believe that this represents in the fire sale of ISC, a broken trust with Saskatchewan . . .

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed to 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Premier

President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd

Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Kevin Doherty

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Minister Responsible for the Provincial
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Hon. Dustin Duncan

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Transportation Company
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Services Corporation
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