



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

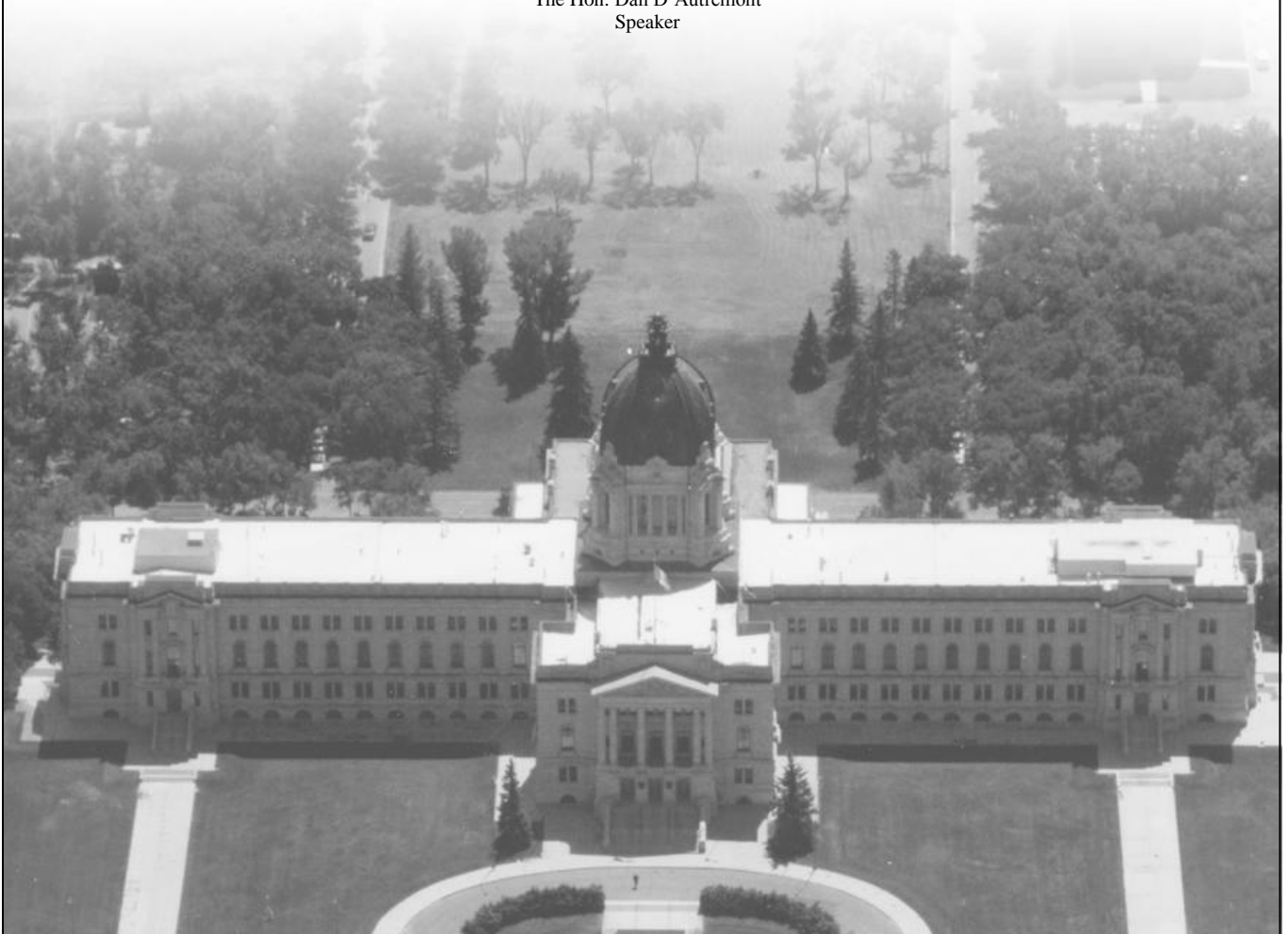
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

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Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
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Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
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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 resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of 7 o'clock, this House stands resumed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 81

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 81 — *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to talk about Bill No. 81, *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act*.

Mr. Speaker, this is legislation that creates a Crown corporation or a Crown entity around the economic activity which people see developing to the west of Regina. And as it's been portrayed by the minister, this legislation is being introduced to provide the authority for the province to be the main director or organizer of how this project proceeds.

We know that this project has been in development over quite a number of years and some of the original ideas have come to fruition in what we see to the west of the city. And it's always interesting to see how ideas that have been developed eventually come forward into actual buildings and roads and facilities are there and also into legislation, which is what we are discussing here tonight.

The legislation that we have here in Bill 81 takes a broad perspective and brings together all of the powers that are necessary to make sure that this project can be managed in a more straightforward manner. I think it's worth going back and taking a look a little bit at where this project is, what it is, and where it's going.

Quite a number of years ago in the city of Regina there was a discussion about how we could move some of the industrial lands in use for the Canadian Pacific Railway, which are located right in downtown Regina, out to the edge of the city. And so discussions around how that change might take place have generated many ideas.

Now we know that in Saskatoon that activity took place when they built the shopping mall right in the centre of the city in the main rail station area in Saskatoon. And the passenger rail side of that was moved out of town, and also much of the rail yards were moved out of the downtown of Saskatoon. The same thing did not happen in Regina during that same time period, and so there continues to be discussion about how and what could be done to get this land back into the hands of the city for

development.

Now as you can see already, that piece of land, which is located just north of the post office or just south of Dewdney Avenue between Albert Street and Broad Street, has had many ideas, many discussions about what could be done with it. And I'm sure probably it could be as far back as 15 years ago there were discussions about how and what could be done. About five or six years ago there became some very real options — I guess maybe seven years ago — some very real options that could include municipal participation, provincial participation, and federal participation in having sufficient funds to move the infrastructure out to the edge of town.

And in that discussion it became clear that one of the main activities for Canadian Pacific Railway in downtown Regina was the off-loading of goods into transport trucks to go onto the highway system and that this was done in quite small space but in an efficient manner. So the goal was to develop some bigger space that would allow that to happen. And in fact now in 2013 there is a major facility with access for many of the transportation companies to off-load goods from the railway onto other systems. And as we all know, that usually means containers full of products which are taken to the transportation hub and then distributed. At the same time there were discussions about other businesses that would be interested in locating in the same area as Canadian Pacific Railway might want to do, and that's where the bigger and broader concept of a transportation hub was developed.

What we also knew was that in Vancouver, where much of the container unloading had taken place with the use of the longshoremen who were the traditional people who unloaded ships, the space there had . . . They had run out of space. What happened in Vancouver then is that much of that unloading of containers into trucks was moved out to the Port Kells area in north Surrey, British Columbia along the Fraser River. But that area became filled up as well, plus the land ended up with having other values because of the increasing population and many other activities were there. So the rail lines and the people who were involved in transportation of goods moved to look across the country where would make the most sense to do some of this kind of activity. And clearly in Manitoba they could see this discussion going, and they have their inland port facility which does something similar to what happens here.

But we had people within the provincial government and within the city government and within the industries who recognized that if we could build something here just outside of Regina, we could deal with the movement of the CP [Canadian Pacific] rail yards out of the centre of the city. We could provide more distribution space for some of our companies that were trying to locate on the Prairies, and a number of positive activities have taken place.

Now in that process, the method of organizing how this facility would be built included the city of Regina, the rural municipality of Sherwood, and the provincial government and also the federal government, for two reasons. The federal government is involved because they had some funding initiatives that related to what I think were called the border expansion kinds of issues. They were basically realizing that the

pressure for trade on our borders — whether it's Windsor-Detroit or Pembina south of Winnipeg or areas south of Calgary or, more importantly in some ways for us, the area around Vancouver, Blaine towards Seattle — those areas had incredible pressure on them. And there was a recognition that there were some other options that could be called border options, even though Regina, Winnipeg are located a long ways away from ships and a long ways away from the normal entry points of containers.

So what we had then, in successive budgets when we were still in government, was the exploration and discussion about how one might organize this type of activity. And I know that in the discussions in the 2007 budget, when the New Democrats were still government, there were initial amounts set aside that would allow this project to go ahead subject to the financial involvement of the federal government. And a good thing for all of us in Saskatchewan is that there was that ability to bring money in from the federal government, working together with provincial funds and then co-operation from the city of Regina and the RM [rural municipality] of Sherwood. The net effect, as the minister stated the other day, was the creation of the legislation that created the Global Transportation Hub, and this was established as a Treasury Board Crown.

Then in June of 2009, that was the time when the money came together, the possibilities of what could happen, and originally created by an order of council in the cabinet. And its goal there was clearly to facilitate this project but to continue to monitor and see what kind of corporate institute, what kind of method of creating authority would make the most sense in the long term as this project developed.

Now as we know from some of the stories that would hit the front pages from time to time, there were growing pains. There were difficulties that arose. And some of the first ones related to acquiring the land and trying to figure out the appropriate price for land that was effectively taken for the use of this project. I think some of those cases and some of those issues are still not totally resolved, so there were a number of things that arose then.

There are also issues around how decisions were made and how quickly they could be made when particular businesses might have wanted to set up shop in that particular area. And I think the most public example was the one last year where Kal Tire ended up wanting to be somewhere close to this whole project but in a visible site along the highway. And so some of the issues there aren't directly related to this particular piece of legislation, but they do relate to the necessity of having clear ways to make decisions in an orderly and transparent fashion.

So the legislation that we have today is effectively legislation that sets up *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act*. And this is effectively a Crown corporation, and it will be a Crown corporation in the world of the Crown Investments Corporation and will have the reporting structures that other Crown corporations that we have in the province presently use. So that's a good thing. And it's a method that we have a strong tradition in the province of following. And so we need to make sure that how this is done will make sure that there's a transparency to what they do.

Now we know that one of the issues that's related to this legislation as it relates to transparency is whether or not it will be added to the list of government institutions for the purposes of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. And the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner has written to the minister identifying that this should be done before this legislation is proclaimed and so that it will be part of what we know is going to happen as this Bill goes forward. And so at some point very soon, we would appreciate hearing from the minister or officials that the Global Transportation Hub Authority corporation will be added to that list of government institutions so that it will be governed by the transparency rules, by the disclosure rules that will then make sure the public gets the information that they need to evaluate what happens in this particular project.

[19:15]

We also know that there have been some changes in the senior management of this particular file. The deputy minister of Highways and Transportation had followed this file right through from some of its initial concepts, and that's Mr. John Law, who then eventually became the president and CEO [chief executive officer] of this particular Global Transportation Hub Authority. He was let go in that role last summer, and new administrative people were put in place. We don't totally know all of the reasons for that, but we have been watching fairly carefully because we know that Mr. Law was a long-time civil servant who had a great interest in this particular project.

So now the matter is going forward. We have this new legislation being introduced by the minister, and we're wanting to make sure that the transparency of what's going to happen with the authority is entirely clear and that it will be run in a professional, businesslike manner like our other Crown corporations.

And the legislation seems to follow the standard Crown format. And so at this stage we don't necessarily have any questions — or I don't have any questions; some of my colleagues may — about how the legislation is drafted, but as with anything, you need to see which rules or which other laws this particular legislation effects.

And what we do know is that this legislation gives the authority the ability to make approvals that trump, if I can use that word, *The Cities Act*, *The Municipalities Act*, or *The Planning and Development Act*. And so any time that . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Saskatoon Greystone on his feet?

Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery there are a couple of guests from the college at Briercrest. We have in our gallery, Mr. Speaker, Marie-Hélène Caron from Quebec and Breanna Bowker from Ontario. They are here for the first time visiting the Saskatchewan legislature tonight, and they are learning about Saskatchewan's history and, as a result, about Canadian history and the significance of this building and this province within our great country. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these two fine young students to their legislature.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 81 — *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act* (continued)

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just getting into the discussion about how this legislation trumps other pieces of legislation like *The Cities Act*, *The Municipalities Act*, and *The Planning and Development Act*. And what it does do is allow for the authority to have possibly super powers compared to some other of our Crown corporations as it relates to land use and planning. And so what we then have is this island of land that has the possibility of its own rules.

Now what we hope would happen is that those rules around planning and use will be developed in conjunction with the neighbours so that there won't be issues of a conflict. But when we look at the legislation, it gives quite sweeping powers to the board and I think ultimately to the minister to put in place things that are for the purpose of the Act but may not necessarily make them the best neighbours for the RM of Sherwood or the city of Regina.

Now we don't think that's going to happen because this is a project that has been developed over a number of years, but our task is to understand what it is in this legislation that may cause disputes down the road. And when you see what happens, effectively the legislation gives the Global Transportation Hub Authority the ability to register their orders or their plans or what other things that they do in the same way that a municipality or a city would do, which then gives it control over the use of the land.

And what also the legislation says is that the land within this authority area must be used pursuant to section 5 of the legislation. But when we go and look at section 5 of the legislation, it lists the uses that can be made of the land. And they're kind of straightforward in a way, but it says:

... the transportation logistics hub may be used as the location of any or all of the following:

(a) facilities and premises used for or required by any mode of transportation, including rail, road, water or air.

So I assume that they could actually build their own heliport or airport right in this area and not end up using the Regina airport. "Facilities and premises used for . . ." quoting again:

(b) facilities and premises used for or required by industry, warehousing, distribution, manufacturing or logistics operations that require or utilize the services of a mode of transportation operating or located in the transportation logistics hub;

(c) public improvements;

(d) facilities and premises that service the things mentioned in clauses (a) to (c);

(e) any other prescribed use or purpose.

So effectively this is pretty wide open but with clearly the intention that it relate to transportation and this use. So as we can see, there's really no space here, I wouldn't think, for perhaps the building of a hotel, having a subdivision with people living in it, but it's not restricted because you could add it as "any other prescribed use or purpose."

But it's interesting when legislation is created that tries to set itself apart from all the existing rules that we have for development. And that is what this does. Now whether . . . We give some powers to SaskPower or SaskTel or others that allow them a bit of a trump card, but this one gives a little bigger trump card than what we're used to for Crown corporations. And then it goes through all of the different procedural kinds of things that you need to for developments.

Now I don't know if, I think . . . I haven't looked at it, but this would be a question we could probably ask when we get into committee. But it, you know, it looks like the Global Transportation Hub will have to adopt building code standards and other things that we just kind of assume are part of municipalities or cities within the province, and there are methods for doing that. And I know practically that the lawyers in Justice would have been looking at this one pretty carefully, as well as the lawyers at Crown Investments Corporation, to make sure that they didn't miss anything. But it begs the question again about this is really a piece of legislation that trumps or is laid over all of the existing laws that we have. And so therefore we need to be especially vigilant to have all of the information about what's happening but also make sure that that information is available to the general public.

Now we also see in the legislation that the authority will pay grants in lieu of property taxes, which is what Crown corporations normally do, and that's I think reasonable that they should do that. They will be paying for the services that they receive, whether it's water and sewer from that system used by the city of Regina or any other services that are provided.

So we have legislation. The purpose appears to be clear that this is to facilitate the development of an economic activity which we all can see is positive for our province and it's positive for this part of North America — because I'm sure we have the possibility of distributing into the northern states as well — and that this kind of operation is something that we have the knowledge and the ability to organize and manage, and so I'm

appreciative of the fact that we have it here in the legislature.

I know that there may be details that we don't fully understand now that we may have to ask questions about. My request at this point, after making some general comments about the legislation, is that we would hear from the minister very soon about the request made by the Privacy Commissioner to have this entity added to the list of government institutions for the purposes of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. And if we could have that now during second reading, it would probably make it easier for us to move it on to the committee.

But otherwise I'm going to be suggesting that this is the continuation and further development of the positive idea which has come from many different angles and is good for the economy of our province. And we need to make sure that it's a robust solution to all of the particular challenges that are there. And we look forward to seeing the positive development of the Global Transportation Hub and want to make sure that it's done in a way that benefits all of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

So with that, I will move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate of Bill No. 81, *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

[19:30]

Bill No. 82

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 82** — *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to rise tonight to join in the debate on Bill No. 82, the Saskatchewan Pension Plan.

I should state right off the top I am a member of the plan and can attest to the fact that when the plan set out to provide benefits — the attractive option for people with irregular or reasonable income, seasonal earnings such as students, part-time workers or people who are self-employed certainly — when I first enrolled in the plan in the early '90s, that was part of the appeal for me at the time. And I continue to contribute to the plan. And so I have a theoretical and legislative interest in this matter, Mr. Speaker, and of course I have a dollars and cents interest in terms of my own pocketbook.

So in terms of making sure that the pension plan is well-administered, that it's keeping up with the times in terms of meeting that initial mandate to provide a savings and pension vehicle for again people such as students, part-time workers or the self-employed, it's interesting to see how this rolls. Of

course the Saskatchewan Pension Plan in Saskatchewan, it's interesting to see how it works in combination with other income security vehicles for our seniors, those federally and again those provincially — things such as, be it the Saskatchewan Income Plan on a provincial basis or the old age security on a federal level or the Guaranteed Income Supplement or indeed the Canada Pension Plan.

And again, as changes are made on the federal level such as the recent intention announced by the federal government to change the age of full subscription to the CPP [Canada Pension Plan] from 65 to 67, how that will impact the pressures on the plan. Again, as the thinking clarifies on the part of the federal government regarding things like the CPP, the GIS [Guaranteed Income Supplement], and the OAS [old age security], it will be interesting to see how that impacts something like the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. So we expect that the Finance minister is diligent in addressing those concerns at the federal level, and we follow that with definite interest, Mr. Speaker.

So the changes announced in the Act: again following in the train of changes that have been made commencing in December 2010, at which point the contribution limit was raised from \$600 to \$2,500; where members were allowed to transfer up to 10,000 per year from an RRSP or registered retirement savings plan or an unlocked registered pension plan, building now to transfer from locked-in vehicles; retirement options being moved from the Act into regulations to allow the plan to be more responsive to the needs of members as the array of retirement products evolves.

Again referencing the minister's second reading speech on this but again, modernizing, making sure that the plan is keeping up with the demand, meeting the need as initially set out. The other amendment, again referencing the second reading speech, to:

... allow funds payable to a member of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan to be transferred to the General Revenue Fund in the event that the member cannot be located. [Again referencing the minister's second reading speech.] This would only be done after all other avenues have been exhausted, and the funds would continue to be held in the member's name. This protocol is similar to the process used by other financial institutions when clients cannot be located.

Again, closing the quote from the second reading speech of the minister, again seems to be a straightforward proposition, but again it would be interesting to get an accounting of how often that particular protocol is invoked and what kind of dollar figures are involved, the number of individuals, and if there isn't something that can be done to safeguard or to better connect individuals to their pension plan. But again we'll see how that rolls out.

The other thing is in the legislation, Mr. Speaker, with the modernization of some of the language. Again, hurray for modernization. Good to see that's happening as well.

So as the minister had touched on in his second reading speech, with the 32,000 members of the plan — again to state, Mr. Speaker, of which I am one — the \$318 million under trusteeship, the principles of simplicity, consistency, voluntary

flexibility, affordability, and making sure that they are professionally managed. Again Saskatchewan Pension Plan has done some unique things of which I think the people of Saskatchewan can be proud, and that the government is looking to work to make sure that this continues to meet the need that is out there, that the fund continues in a strong and growing way as it should be.

I know that other of my colleagues are interested in joining into the debate, so with that, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 82, *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2012*.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 82, *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 83

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 83** — *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into the discussion about Bill No. 83, *An Act respecting Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services*.

This bill has been set out to ensure that newcomers, people who have been recruited to Saskatchewan to either work as temporary foreign workers or in the immigrant nominee program, will be protected from perhaps unscrupulous recruiters or immigration consultants, or when employers have struggles as well in properly supporting their employees. Just to mention what the minister says in his second reading speech, he says here:

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, as the title suggests, is being introduced to protect foreign workers and immigrants from exploitation by recruiters, immigration consultants, and employers while being recruited to Saskatchewan or are in the process of immigrating to our . . . [process].

So that is the gist of this bill, Mr. Speaker. Obviously in Saskatchewan in recent years, from the introduction of the immigrant nominee program onward, we've seen a huge increase in newcomers coming to our province to make a home here or to come and work temporarily. I know in my own constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale the changing face of Saskatchewan. Actually it's interesting: I've got schools in my constituency where there are more than 20 different countries represented and even more languages spoken at two particular schools in Saskatoon Riversdale, which has made for a very interesting dynamic culture, Mr. Speaker.

But the reality is when people come to Saskatchewan to work that there may be some challenges. Sometimes there's language barriers. Sometimes there's a lack of understanding of the culture. And it can leave you vulnerable to those who perhaps want to take advantage of you, Mr. Deputy . . . Mr. Speaker, I'm still in afternoon mode here. Mr. Speaker, this leaves workers open to the possibility of being treated poorly and unfairly.

Imagine coming to Saskatchewan from a place like Mexico where the climate obviously is very different. Sometimes you will leave family behind and you're in . . . Imagine coming from Mexico to Saskatchewan in January. It would be a climate shock, first of all, but then being told about fees that you're supposed to pay. So a recruiter or a consultant might tell you that there are things that you're supposed to do, and then you're not quite sure about the lay of the land and what the rules are. And even if you think the rules are unfair you might not . . . you might have come from a country where approaching authority isn't the easiest thing to do. So for some individuals who've travelled from other countries to work here and support our businesses that are facing labour force shortages, some people aren't always comfortable going to authorities, whether it's the police service or any others who might be in a position of power. So it leaves you extra vulnerable.

And we've heard cases actually here just outside of Regina at a coffee shop where there were some workers who weren't getting paid vacation pay, who were being housed in one of the owner's friend's basement, multiple people living in a basement dwelling, being told all kinds of things about housing.

So it's a good thing that Bill No. 83, *An Act respecting Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services*, it is absolutely imperative that we ensure the playing field is levelled for those who come to Canada and come to Saskatchewan in the pursuit of a better life, whether they're coming here just temporarily to work or if they're coming to hopefully, eventually become permanent residents and make Saskatchewan their home going forward, Mr. Speaker.

I know we have a huge labour force shortage and it can be very difficult for employers to find people. But the one thing that this bill doesn't do and doesn't talk about here, and the minister didn't talk about because this bill is very much focused on foreign workers, but here in Saskatchewan we have a huge untapped resource of Aboriginal employees and people who are interested in being active citizens and an active part of our economy, Mr. Speaker, who are not given the opportunity and are not given the supports to be able to . . . a fair opportunity to become an active part of the economy.

I want to point out the record of this government when it comes to local homegrown individuals who would like to work in this province, Mr. Speaker. Year over year, from 2000 on, the government has not had a good track record when it has come to First Nations and Métis employment. Right now here in Saskatchewan, First Nations unemployment is at 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and Métis unemployment is at 11 per cent. This has been a year over year constant increase.

I'd like to point out that, I believe it was in 2010, this government cut the Aboriginal employment development

program, which was by all accounts working, Mr. Speaker. It makes absolutely no sense, contrary to common sense, to cut a program that was working very well connecting industry and the workforce. And what would happen, Mr. Speaker, is it was a partnership that would see industry training, partnering with government and training Aboriginal employees who would have the opportunity then, if the relationship worked out well, there would be the opportunity for the employees to stay on perhaps past the program. And it was having huge success.

So we have a huge group of people here, a young First Nations and Métis population here in Saskatchewan, the fastest demographic. And I think, although we do need to fill some pressing labour force shortages, I think one of the best ways would be to concentrate on ensuring people who live here also have opportunities, fair opportunities to be employed.

It was interesting — several years ago in about 2007 when I was working for the work and family unit, I had the opportunity to work with employers, some very good employers, in fact a Tim Hortons owner in Saskatoon who was very interested in supporting her employees in getting child care. She was very frustrated that at one point I think she had four staffers on maternity leave, and she wasn't frustrated that they were on maternity leave but she was worried about what it would look like when her employees came back because there isn't . . . There are not too many places, Mr. Speaker, where licensed child care starts at 6 in the morning or earlier, and that's what time the Tim Hortons shifts at this particular restaurant started. So this employer, along with actually a very reputable hotel chain in Saskatchewan, was very interested in supporting their employees in child care. And this goes to supporting our local labour force, Mr. Speaker.

So what had happened is . . . Actually this was great to be able to connect these employers with the provincial government at the time so the people in child care who, because it's the provincial government who regulates, licenses and regulates child care, and then the Catholic Family Services of Saskatoon who happened to be a child care provider. So putting these three partners together — Catholic Family Services of Saskatoon, the province child care folks, and the employers who wanted to support their employees and try to create some non-standard child care so their employees would have access to child care when they needed it because there is not a lot of licensed child care offered outside of the Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 workday, Mr. Speaker. That is a huge gap that's missing in child care here in Saskatchewan which would go a long way to supporting employment in this province.

[19:45]

So these three people, these three organizations connected and it took years to get the child care off the ground. I remember having a couple of conversations with the Tim Hortons owner, who is a fine employer and really wanted to do right by her employees. And I actually at an MLA reception I believe two years ago, I ran into her here at the restaurant association's meeting with MLAs. And we hadn't chatted in quite some time. She had been working on this proposal to get child care for her and other employees outside of the non-standard times and finally gave up and went the route of bringing in temporary foreign workers, which has worked out very well for her, and

she is a very good employer and now is working on trying to get family members here — or had been until the government cut the family class in the immigrant nominee program. But the point is, I know this Tim Hortons employer would have been very happy to support Saskatchewan residents in keeping their employment at Tim Hortons. She was very keen on doing that, wanted to support them, wanted to help them have child care that allowed them to have some work-family balance and allow them the opportunity to be good employees, and gave up because it was such a long and slow process.

So there are ways to support local people as well. So this Bill No. 83, with respect to foreign worker recruitment and immigration services, is absolutely imperative for ensuring that those who come to Saskatchewan are protected and well served and are not . . . as vulnerable as they are, that they aren't taken advantage of. But I need to emphasize that there are things that we could and should be doing here to support local people in employment as well. I don't believe that we're doing enough to ensure First Nations and Métis people have opportunity and access to employment. Not nearly enough, Mr. Speaker.

Actually it was interesting. I had an opportunity to talk to some steel workers probably about a month ago who were talking about a new program that the province is participating in around training for the uranium industry. And it's a good program. They weren't negative about the program. But it was a post adult basic education program, so it was once you had your grade 12 or your GED, this is a program that would apply to you. And it was about industry training, which was good. But the steel workers had pointed out for me that there are many people still, because there are many students who are not graduating from grade 12 and the supports for adult basic education are not in place and — actually if you walk it right back to early learning and care — that we are not investing in education the way we need to at the front end, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that people are well prepared and ready for the labour force.

So I know these steel workers had said that they really believe that a place where more emphasis could be put is on adult basic education and making sure that people had all the skills that they needed with respect to grade 12 or an equivalent, so then they could pursue some of these post-secondary education opportunities or some of the skills training that some of the companies offered. But if you have trouble with literacy it's hard to participate in . . . or literacy and numeracy, it's hard to participate in other training programs, Mr. Speaker. So they had some concerns that we really need to back up and place some emphasis on ensuring that we have people graduating from grade 12.

It's interesting. We also have had the debate in the House for . . . We've only been sitting now for two days, Mr. Speaker, but around education. And we have some concerns on this side of the House around the government focusing on testing and not teaching. And I know the minister has referenced the not great graduation rates of our Aboriginal people here, Aboriginal citizens here in Saskatchewan. But we would argue, and the evidence illustrates, that testing isn't the way to ensure people are getting their education, Mr. Speaker.

So although Bill 83 is necessary and will offer some protection

to newcomers, we really need to ensure that we're placing the emphasis also on our local workforce, Mr. Speaker. There's so many opportunities. The reality is that the fastest growing demographic is our First Nations and Métis population. And this is a wonderful opportunity. This is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we all have an opportunity to participate fully in our economy.

So again just taking you back to Bill 83, just imagine what it's like to be a vulnerable worker in a country, in a city that you don't know. You don't know where you are. Or the climate is brand new, the language is brand new, the customs and the culture are brand new, and you become a very easy target. And there are some great employers out there but there are also some people who will take advantage when they can. So Bill 83 is an important bill to ensure that we protect all people who come to Saskatchewan and who live in Saskatchewan, and make sure that there is a level playing field.

So I do know I have colleagues who will also want to wade into the debate on Bill No. 83 at some time in the very near future. So with that I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 83, *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 84

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 84 — *The Common Business Identifiers Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this evening to rise in the Assembly and speak to Bill No. 84, which is a new Act that's being introduced, *An Act respecting Common Business Identifiers*. This was introduced by the Minister of Justice in the last portion of the session and it was . . . sorry, one moment please. I want to find his comments. That was on December 4th, 2012. And what he indicated in his opening remarks was how this government is working on creating a business-friendly environment.

So these are the types of things that we see happening as a modernization of businesses through normal government processes, where we can have streamlining of services for businesses, especially in the fairly electronic age that we're in right now, Mr. Speaker.

So we can see there's a lot of opportunities presented to us by the various services that you can do over the Internet now, and that obviously streamlining of how Canadian businesses do business, not only in Saskatchewan but in other provinces, is a way to share business information effectively and efficiently on the Internet.

The word that's being used here in the introduction is, he refers to this as a hub. And the hub in this case is a hub, not the one that our leader was speaking to previously in Regina, but this is a hub for sharing business information. And the idea is to bring all of these services into some sort of usable format across the country so that there can be common identifiers for business that can allow information to be collected. It will allow information to be shared between the CRA or Canada Revenue Agency and then other government programs to use a common business identifier known as the business number. And for anyone who has a business in Saskatchewan or have done payroll or anything like that, they will know how ubiquitous the CRA business number is in all the forms that you fill out, certainly anything to do with taxation, but also income tax, HST [harmonized sales tax], GST [goods and services tax], all of those things that we use a federal business number for.

So we can see other provinces have done this already, and although the minister himself didn't make a lot of comments about what kind of impact this single business number would have, or the common business identifiers, the website for the British Columbia business registry has some good information on the project they enacted about 10 years ago. Their bill has been in place, I believe, since really 2003. But it's just the effect is to harmonize service delivery among various levels of government, and the hope is that it would result in less red tape for businesses. According to the British Columbia materials it was already being used in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and Ontario, and that Manitoba was also working on a common business identifier project. All these were attempting to use the federal business number.

Now it's not clear to me from the minister's comments whether he's planning to use the federal business number that all businesses have for taxation through CRA [Canada Revenue Agency], but I'm assuming that that would be the intent of the bill, and the minister has talked a little bit in his opening comments about indicating it would be an exchange of information between the CRA and the corporate registry. So again I'm assuming his goal and the plan of the ministry is to ensure that it's the common business number is the one that's used by Revenue Canada.

So we see British Columbia has done this a few years ago. We also see that New Brunswick has done it and their bill was passed in 2002. And these are short bills, Mr. Speaker, that just sort of set up the system for doing that. So in order to understand what the proposal is here, we need to take a look at the bill itself.

The first section of the bill, as always, is a section of definitions and there's a various number of definitions, more in this bill than in the other provinces' bills which makes you wonder. Sometimes the use of definitions is an art in and of itself, I think, when it comes to drafting legislation. So the drafters, in this case, in the ministry have chosen to have a number of definitions that are laid out there.

When we look at what the common business identifier definition . . . it refers actually to section 6 and I want to jump to that right away before we get into the other sections. And this section, basically in section 6 it says that to assign a common business identifier — so this is the commonness part of it — if

they provide information in order to get the number, if they need to provide information to a public body under the bill and then the public body can ask for some information from them, and for the purpose of assigning the common business identifier to the entity, the public body may then use that information and provide it to the Government of Canada.

So the definition of common business identifier, in my view, is not very clear. And I think if the drafters take a close look at that, there's . . . It's difficult to understand what the definition is other than it's one that's being assigned pursuant to section 6. So there's some maybe lack of clarity, and perhaps, Mr. Speaker, not having had an opportunity to work with this section, that may be the reason for the lack of clarity. But it's something that I think is a bit muddy right now.

And it would be helpful if we understood right off the hop in the bill if this is indeed the business number that's being used by Canada Revenue Agency or not. It is somewhat vague. And again maybe this government doesn't want to be pinned down to using that actual number and may have plans for a different common business identifier, but I think that leaves the reader somewhat at a loss to understand exactly where it's going.

Section 2 then is the definition section, and section 3 is the fees section. And this allows the cabinet through the Lieutenant Governor in Council to fix fees. And again, the minister through this section can also engage with a person to provide special services if they want to give those services. And I'm not sure what that special service would be, but it's there in section 3(2) of the proposed Act.

And then section 4 is titled the "System of common business identifiers." So that's where again the Governor in Council or the cabinet is going to have the ability to make regulations for establishing their system of common business identifiers for business entities. And again this is one of those sections where I am a bit uncomfortable because the actual process itself is not identified. It only gives the authority and the power to the cabinet to make those regulations. So it's a bit lacking in detail, and I think it's something that merits further examination once the regulations are passed. But unfortunately there won't be any comment by the public on the regulations until after they are in fact law, which makes it a little more difficult to provide feedback from our perspective in the opposition but also from the public's perspective if they're not consulted prior to the considerations that will be found in the regulations.

[20:00]

Section 5 sets up a system that the minister can enter into agreements with public bodies to access the information collected by the minister. So this is sensitive information, business information that will need to be protected, and presumably this agreement would identify how that information will be protected if it's handed over to a public body. And the section identifies what provisions that the agreements need to have, which is a fairly straightforward clause.

I've already spoken to number 6, section 6, which as I said is the nub of the definition of what a common business identifier is and, as I said, it just . . . Once it's assigned, it becomes a common business identifier, but this section doesn't really

clearly identify what that would look like.

Section 7 is just basically how these identifiers will be used and when they may be required. Now public body is also defined, and it's referred to frequently throughout the bill, and in this case public body is defined as ". . . any of the following with which the minister has entered into an agreement pursuant to section 5," which we just talked about. So once the minister has entered into an agreement with this body, whatever it may be, it becomes a public body under the Act. And in this case it could be either a government institution, a local authority, or any other prescribed body.

So it may be someone like the corporations branch that's currently doing and working with information related to business identification. I would expect that may be the kind of agency that the government would want to manage this kind of common business identifier registry, although it doesn't . . . There's no registry mentioned, but I would assume there would be some record or way of keeping the data stored.

Section 9 in the Act talks about how information can be disclosed by the minister, and section 10 deals with the filing and accessing of information. So what this section says, and it's of interest for those who are worried about the information:

[Any] Information that business entities are required to file or are authorized to access pursuant to a designated enactment may be filed or accessed . . . [by people] authorized to do so in the . . . agreement between the minister and the public body.

So again we see the details will be more evident once the ministry has actually entered into an agreement with a public body and has brought that public body into the provisions of the Act.

Section 11 is an immunity clause, and then finally section 12 . . . Or sorry, the second last clause . . . Section 12 allows the minister to delegate the exercise of any of the powers within the Act.

And section 13, which is the longest section of the Act, is the one that allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council and cabinet through the Lieutenant Governor in Council to do a whole bunch of things. And again, we won't know what those actually look like until after this is law, so it's a bit difficult to comment on that at this point in time.

But there's, for example, the very first authority that they can make regulations about under section 13(1)(a) is to define, enlarge, or restrict the meaning of any word in the Act. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, this is a pretty broad, broad section that allows the cabinet to change the meaning of any word in the Act. And that's something that I think, you know, the members of the public maybe somewhat concerned about because it gives cabinet basically ability to amend the law without ever having to amend the law. And it gives them great powers. So if people are concerned about that, you know, we would ask that they bring that concern to the government, and certainly as we are making comment here as the official opposition and holding the government to account, we will be able to bring those concerns forward as well.

They can prescribe what a body is. They can prescribe dates. They can prescribe Acts or regulations or portions of Acts or regulations as designated enactments. They can establish standards under regulation.

The forms, now that's a normal thing you would see in regulatory powers is what kinds of forms, and that's not something that changes the substance of the law. It's just how you fill out the form. That's the appropriate use of regulations.

And there's other ones that talk about the format, electronic format that's going to be used. Procedure for paying fees, that makes sense in a regulation, how the fees are going to be collected, who you make the cheque out to. Procedures for business entities to file information, again, those types of things make sense, how to make financial and statistical reports, common dates or periods to file, all of those things that are required.

It's not clear to me within the provisions of the Act where this information will be stored or who will be responsible for it. Presumably those are the kinds of things that would be covered off in the public body's agreement with the government. But we don't have a lot of clarity on that either. So we're not exactly sure how that's going to work.

Just finally to go back to . . . That's basically the substance of the bill. Just to revisit the comments of the minister when he did the second reading on the bill, to move the second reading on the bill, he said that this information here is only going to be "general public information" and information about their involvement with the specific program or details with its interaction with a government agent would not be shared. So I think that will bring some comfort to these companies when they realize how widely their information could be shared.

But it allows the government and all the agencies . . . And he says municipalities will have access to this as well. So again, I'm not sure how that's going to happen. It's not clear in the Act how municipalities will be provided this information, but somehow through this hub that he describes.

And again, the Act itself does not seem to describe how this hub will operate, but he's calling the hub a "secure database." So the hub I guess is some form of database that certain public bodies and agencies will have access to. He even identifies in his comments about the ". . . extensive regulation-making powers to establish or adopt the business number system . . . [and] standardize procedures to file information . . ." etc., as I referred to earlier.

So basically I think there may be other comments. Many of my colleagues have not had an opportunity to address this bill yet, since it was introduced late in the session last December. But I think at this point, Mr. Speaker, I think I've made pretty much all the comments I want to make, and I would like to adjourn debate on this bill.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 84, *The Common Business Identifiers Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 45

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. McMorris that **Bill No. 45 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Saskatchewan Telecommunications) Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm happy to rise to speak this evening, again, to Bill No. 45 which is *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Act and The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Act*. There's a couple of changes that are being introduced by this bill. And I guess whenever we get an opportunity to come and speak to the Assembly about our Crown corporations, we like to take an opportunity to do that and maybe raise some concerns that we see happening with our Crowns these days.

There's different things that are happening with the Crowns. One of the articles I have here that we talked about last fall was the concerns we raised in this House about using a company called Huawei, and the Sask Party, or sorry, SaskTel entered into a contract with this company despite the fact that the United States intelligence committees were quite concerned about the company and security risks. So we did raise some concerns about that last fall in relation to the Huawei deal, and so I think basically we'll be watching that with interest to make sure that our information isn't being somehow compromised by entering into this kind of contract.

Another issue that we raised in relation to SaskTel was the way Internet service was being delivered to many of the rural customers, and there was even editorials written about that and concerns about SaskTel's inability to plan ahead. We're not happy to see that our Crown corporation's been put in this situation, and we're still wanting to see SaskTel be able to deliver the products and the services that we feel are appropriate for the people of Saskatchewan.

We know that it's not easy to access every community in a meaningful way. And certainly to ensure that Internet services are available to the SaskTel customers in far-flung corners of the province, Mr. Speaker, is something that needs to be monitored and a vigilant eye be kept on it.

We're worried, and in fact the editorial itself raised the question. It says . . . And this is an editorial from the *Leader-Post* from September 27. And the question was why the federal decision on taking back the broadband spectrum allocation that SaskTel was using, why was SaskTel caught off guard? And why, the question is why a profitable corporation whose net income since 2007 has ranged from 84 million to more than 150 million a year, why they haven't invested in alternatives to provide uninterrupted rural Internet services. And the question they had was what effect the government's policy of carving out for its own use most of the profits has had on the utility's ability to properly serve the needs of rural customers. And the editorial noted that that's the interesting

question. What effect has this government's policy of carving out for its own use the profits from our Crowns is having on the Crowns themselves?

And this is something, Mr. Speaker, that I hear, you know, pretty much everywhere I go, no matter if I'm out visiting some of our rural people in some of my activities as critic for Agriculture. We hear the issues coming up there. I hear them certainly within my own constituency, and just in any sort of public setting that I end up in. People are concerned about the net effect of this government's continual, as they said here, carving out of the profits of these Crowns in order to deal with the government's own fiscal woes.

And I think we know that SaskPower has a looming infrastructure deficit in the billions, and yet we still see this government, however you want to characterize it, using the profits of these companies to bolster its own flagging budget estimates. And this is not something I think that is going to serve the Crowns well, and it certainly won't serve the people of Saskatchewan well if we continue to deplete the assets of the Crowns in order to bolster up a budget that's flimsy to begin with. So that's a real concern I think that SaskTel customers need to be worried about and citizens of Saskatchewan certainly need to be concerned about.

In order to address the bill itself, I want to first of all look at the comments of the minister as he introduced it. It was introduced on November 5th. That was one of the first bills that we looked at this session. And basically the essence of the bill, according to the minister, is to deal with the "... housekeeping matter of monetary limits of orders in councils and the length of the term of borrowing by SaskTel."

In his estimation, you know, this is to reflect what's happening in the bond market in Canada, where bonds are now being issued for 30 years or more. And the current bill has a limitation of 30 years on some of these borrowing limits. So now because of credit upgrades, based on the hard work of the previous government and ensuring that our finances were in order after a difficult time in the '80s, the credit rating was actually improved quite a bit in the '90s and the early 2000s. So now because of the improved credit rating and the upgrades, then this government is able to take advantage of that, and now SaskTel as well can also get availing of financing that goes beyond 30 years. Whether someone wants to borrow beyond 30 years, I think that's a question in and of itself.

And maybe for the large types of infrastructure upgrades that our Crowns are not only required to do but are able to do because of the strength of the Crowns, the time frame itself is something that I think we see a lot of people going into personal debt for longer than 30 years, and it is of concern. So whether or not it's prudent for Crowns to do the same type of long-term debt, that's perhaps a discussion for another day. But we see that the Department of Finance itself is now borrowing at longer terms. And who knows what the economy will be like in 20 years from now or 25 years from now or 30 years from now, but this is something that is binding our government for a much longer period of time.

[20:15]

At any rate, the Minister indicated that in the last fiscal year, from 2011 to the end of September 2012, SaskTel spent about 300 million on its network here in Saskatchewan. And certainly I've been fortunate to have the fibre optic line installed in my own home and are appreciative of the extended broadband width that me and my family can access. So these are things that customers are looking for. We know now that the new LTE [long-term evolution] network is available for cellphone users and smart phone users and anyone who's got the new iPhone is able to access the LTE. Long-term evolution is what LTE stands for.

So we see the benefits of having that wireless network already being introduced here in Saskatchewan. These things cost money and so the housekeeping matter that this bill is intended to look after is to align the dollar limit that the Crown has with the order in council for the Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan model.

So currently, if SaskTel spends . . . purchases lands in excess of a hundred thousand dollars, they need to go to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to get an order, go to Cabinet. And for what happens there, is that will delay the purchase of the land for cell towers. And certainly I think that kind of change is one that makes sense and will help. If it will help our Crowns move more quickly and provide better service in the competitive cellular market then, especially in the larger cities when you can easily spend over \$100,000 for a piece of land, that would make a lot of sense.

So the amendment itself in the bill basically deals with section 11(3) of the SaskTel Act and section 28(2) of the SaskTel Act. And the current section indicates, on 11(3), it's the limit of \$100,000 for purchase of real property, and that Lieutenant Governor in Council approval needs to be obtained. So what they're doing here, they're suggesting that we would delete or repeal that section and just say that the corporation needs to get the approval of the Lieutenant Governor if the purchase price or sale price of real property exceeds the amounts fixed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

So here again, Mr. Speaker, we don't know now what the limit is because that's something that's been taken out of the Act and won't even go to regulations. It's just the discretionary approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. So who knows what level is going to be too much for purchase of a price of real property. But that's something that we are now passing out of the legislation into the hands of cabinet, and it will be solely within the power of cabinet to make that kind of decision.

Right or wrong, it's something I think that the public needs to be aware of. And certainly, hopefully if anyone has concerns about these types of passing off of power to cabinet, they will indicate their concerns. It's a technical thing maybe for a lot of people, but I think it's a definite shift of decision-making authority and power from this Assembly to the closed doors of the cabinet room.

Section 28(2) is the one regarding the monies that are . . . the term of the borrowing of the money. And as I said, it currently is not to exceed 30 years. They're going to repeal that section 28(2) and they're going to substitute a new section that just says any monies that they are authorized to borrow are to be

borrowed according to *The Financial Administration Act*, which is how the Crown Investments Corporation's financial limits are established. So it just basically follows the limits that the Crown Investments Corporations are following.

So the same thing is being proposed in this bill to *The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Act*. So not only is *The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Act* being amended, but also *The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Act*. And it's the same kind of changes. The section 11(4) of that Act has a limit of \$200,000 for a purchase or sale of real property in one transaction, and now we are going to see cabinet allowed to set the dollar amount rather than approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Sorry, it could be any amount. I guess it could be less than \$200,000 as well, but I presume that cabinet would be more interested in setting a level of higher than \$200,000. Otherwise why amend the Act?

And then the other change that's going to be done is the change to allow, to bring it in line with *The Financial Administration Act* and to get rid of the 30-year term. So currently in that bill — this is the SaskTel holding appropriation Act — it's saying that the 30-year term is being removed and they are now to borrow, the term is going to be in line with *The Financial Administration Act*.

So that's the essence of the changes I think that the government is proposing in this bill. Again you know, the idea of extending financing beyond 30 years is one that I think may be a topic for larger discussion with the public, when we see the concerns that we are now seeing families face when they are now looking at those longer borrowing terms, and whether or not that's appropriate for a Crown corporation.

You know, as long as the profits of the companies are being drained to bolster the provincial government's budgets, this is something these utilities are going to be forced to do, especially in the face of significant upgrades to any of their systems like the LTE or any other services in relation to delivery to homes like the new fibre optic line. Or in the case of SaskPower, we know that a lot of the power generating plants are old and tired and are going to need renewal in some form, if it's retrofit or actual rebuild.

So those are the kinds of concerns I think that we need to keep an eye on. And we certainly look to the listening public and people who follow these kinds of things to raise their concerns as well, and certainly provide comment to us in the opposition or to make sure their concerns are directly relayed to the government as well.

At that point, Mr. Speaker, I think I am prepared to . . . I'm not sure anyone else in our caucus is going to speak to this, so I think I am going to suggest that we move this bill to committee.

The Speaker: — The member has moved second reading of Bill No. 45, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Saskatchewan Telecommunications) Amendment Act, 2012*. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? To which committee shall this bill be referred? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate that this bill be moved to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

Bill No. 46

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 46** — *The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To join in on Bill 46, the amendment Act, *The Municipal Employees' Pension Act*, there's a number of different things in the minister's comments, proposed changes that are coming ahead. And one of the first ones on there is allowing the chairperson or vice-chairperson to be appointed for an additional year, one-year term.

And I know there's been a question, why has this come forward? And there was an argument based on it and I guess colleagues, for myself, wondering in that provision why we would allow that provision in there? Like what would be the purpose of it? If you're looking at the term, wouldn't you, when you appoint them to a term, provide them with a time whether it's three years, five years to look after and to be on the committee that would look after the pension plan? You would think you have provisions in there, Mr. Speaker, to provide for that, but apparently that's not so and they want to have the ability to appoint the Chair or Vice-Chair for an additional year. So we've tried to ask a little bit of questions. And I know there's more work on that area will be asked, and when it does go to committee they'll ask that. But I guess for now that's one area that people are wondering about.

Now I want to talk about the pension that we're talking about. It's the government employees' pension, municipal pension, teachers, school divisions. There's a number of different municipalities belong to this pension. And they talk about, I think there's about 16,000 members belong to this pension, currently 4,000 utilizing the pension, getting a monthly pension from there as it is. So they're making sure that the provisions in there with the committee . . . When they're dealing with pensions like this, you have a committee that's appointed, and the government and the minister appoints the individuals on this

committee. There's a 10-member committee that looks after, you know, the administration, the daily operation, and the fund to make sure the funds are secure. And that's what I can take from this. That's kind of what it's doing.

Now they're asking in a provision in here, Mr. Speaker, to provide for a majority of, I guess, the committee to make decisions, and with a simple majority that group would then carry on. So they're looking at different options in this provision and that's one area that, you know, will require a decision made by the MEPP [municipal employees' pension plan] pension plan.

Now having said that, it's like anything else: individuals that pay into this pension want to make sure that the pensions are protected. They want to make sure the government does all it can to appoint, I guess, competent . . . to make sure that individuals that serve on this look after the assets that somebody has worked maybe 30 years, 25 years of their life. They want to make sure that that pension is protected for them.

So I know there's a lot of questions that will go on on how it's managed. And not that individuals want to manage it, but I think sometimes we've seen some of the pensions, they have done very well for people who have retired, individuals that are looking forward to a pension. Some of the pension plans out there do an excellent job of administrating the pension plans, overseeing them, making sure that individuals' pensions are well taken care of. But unfortunately sometimes we've seen some areas where pensions are . . . How do we say people's lifetime earnings and their pensions have been . . . Well I guess some of the reports that are in here have shown some challenges and I guess some real concerns to individuals who have seen their pensions disappear in different ways — the assets they've had to work for years, then they've seen them dwindle away, you know. So I think it's clear that we want to make sure that the provisions in here and the questions that we would have cover those individuals.

But having also said that, I guess it also refers to individuals in here who, let's just say you're planning your retirement and something would happen to you. There is a provision here they're looking at for a spouse, if their partner happens to pass away, that there's provisions in there to protect the spouse to make sure that that individual is going to receive the benefit that the person that owns the pension plan or had worked for the years who had paid into it, that their family, their loved one receives the benefit of their years of, I guess, of work that they've put in. And I think that's good that we're looking at those options. And there are some provisions in there that the minister is clearly bringing forward that we have to do some work on.

But having said that, there's another area, you know, we'll go into and we can discuss that. But I want to use some examples and it's clearly, whether it's pensions, whether it's the public's dollars, and when I refer to public and I want to show examples, people expect in their pension plan the government to appoint individuals to look after their assets. It's the same thing, Mr. Speaker: individuals want their tax dollars, they want the assets they own — whether it's in Crown corporations, whether it's in tax that they pay — they want those assets protected. They want to make sure the government protects those assets. They want to

make sure the government uses those assets to the benefit of Saskatchewan people and to the benefit of the province.

And a lot of times we're seeing some of the challenges that the current government is not doing the best it can with the people's assets. And we've seen light of that today. We've seen light of that yesterday. And I think we're going to see more of that as we go on where the assets that belong to the people of this good province — and you know, many people are really proud of this province — the government makes decisions.

[20:30]

And just like this committee will look after assets that I guess individuals pay to their pension plan, and it's in there. Having said that, I want to show the comparisons. It's no different than our northern trappers. It's no different than individuals who have, whether it's SaskTel, SaskPower, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], here's Crown corporations that the people own. It's their asset. They pay. And sometimes, you know, they want to make sure those assets are being taken care of. We see the mismanagement of the government who takes their assets and doesn't always do right with them and that's clearly . . . that's coming out more and more. And people are paying attention, the public is paying attention to that. It's public dollars.

So I want to show the comparisons when there are assets that belong to people, individuals. They expect the government to do the right thing. They expect governments to take care of those assets. They expect government to have provisions to protect those assets from some of the challenges that we're seeing, and they're coming out clearly. And I think the questions that the minister, you know, were asked today clearly show that the government's making its choices on some of those assets. And some of those decisions the government has made has not been good for the people that own assets. Whether it's pension plan, whether it's the public's dollars, the public expects better of their government, and they want to make sure their assets are protected. And clearly there's provisions in here that the government's strengthening, but I think maybe we have to have more strength with the public dollars and more accountability on the government, on the politicians, that people are saying, here, we trust you politicians with our dollars. We want you to do the right thing. And we don't want to see those . . . We work hard for those dollars to be paid in. We work hard to pay our power bills. We work hard to put food on the table, so we want our assets looked after.

We want the money that we pay in as taxes to provide good service for all Saskatchewan people, whether that's bus routes to communities . . . And we've seen that today where routes are being cut, where you have seniors who are going to suffer. You have small business that may not see the opportunity of having STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] coming in because clearly the government is making choices. And I guess it boils down to individuals and it boils down to people and community, and we're looking at the rural community and this government, unfortunately, with the cuts it's making, clearly.

But it has money and it has all the assets of the people to have more politicians, to elect more politicians, clearly. My colleagues have talked about that today when we talked about

some of the bills, that we've had concerns raised to us by individuals, concerns raised to us by our colleagues, by members of the public about their assets and making sure. So those concerns are clearly being raised.

So when I say that the public's watching, the public wants to make sure their assets are being taken care of. So we see decisions this government is making, impact decisions. So when we look at this bill, Bill 46, and we've asked and the government asked a committee to look after it, and they asked them and they put in provisions to make sure that these individuals protect the assets of the pension plan of the individuals. It's no different than the individuals electing the members of the Sask Party in this House to look after their assets and to make sure that they do right with those assets.

And I'm telling you, people are watching, and they're not happy with some of the stuff they're seeing and they're very concerned. And we see some of the decisions, whether it's roads in northern Saskatchewan, the trappers' association getting nothing. They've asked for a little bit of help. This government has chosen not to utilize those assets to assist our trappers, whether the trappers want to apply for funding . . .

So I'm trying to show examples how Bill 46 . . . When you're talking about the assets of individuals, those are assets of the people of the province. When I talk about our trappers, our commercial fisherman, our municipalities, there is a lot of examples I can use to show people's assets. And I want to make it clear.

So the people have asked the government to make sure that they take care of those assets. And if they don't, you will pay a price. The people will send a message to the politicians. The priorities that this government has had, and again it goes back to assets. And that's why I've talked about Bill 46. And I want to be very clear — they are showing the assets owned. We are providing protection. I think there's more protection needs to be put on the public's dollars that this government's been using. And I mean, it can spin it the way they want but, Mr. Speaker, clearly the people want a government to respect the hard-earned dollars that they pay into the government coffers, that those dollars are managed properly, that those dollars are taken care of, that those dollars have accountability on them because of hard-working people out there that are trying their best to make ends meet.

And we've seen, today we've seen our seniors coming in here that rent, and individuals, and you look at their assets. They want to make sure their assets are taken care of. When they look at paying out the rent that they're asked and the increases and those questions that were raised today, it goes back to the same thing. People are preparing for their retirement, and here's a pension plan that will provide certain assets to be paid to individuals when they retire. They'll be on fixed income. And if this is what we're telling them, well here's what your fixed income will do, you're going to have rent increases because we're not providing, you know, incentives with rent controls or to even consult and talk to individuals. And that's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that in these times and hard times that individuals on fixed income are facing.

So when I see provisions like this to protect pension plans,

which is good, and they want to make some adjustments, then that's fine. We need to amend some of the policies. But maybe we can come up with a bill that would protect renters, like with rent control for students, for people on fixed income, for our seniors. That would be nice to see happen. And that would be nice to see, another way of protecting so we show this.

But at this point, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to share a little bit of, I guess of information on pension, on assets, and I want to talk about the people's assets out there and clearly what they expect. And they expect better from a government than to worry about their government's own area, and I mean their priorities are this: millions for more politicians while others out there with the assets are suffering to maintain, keeping those assets coming in to the government to deal with.

So having said that, at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm prepared to really seriously look at moving this bill to committee at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 46, *The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

Bill No. 47

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 47** — *The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening and speak to Bill No. 47, the third bill that was introduced by the government in this current portion of the session. It was introduced back last November actually when we started sitting. And it's a fairly uninteresting bill actually; there's not a whole lot going on in this bill.

Basically what the minister is doing is just changing the name of the organization. And we can look to his comments a little bit when he introduced it back on November 5th. The minister spoke at length about his 25-year plan for water. And what we see here is I think more a form of lexicon that is creeping into

the vernacular of North America really, and it probably started back when we heard the phrase homeland security.

So after 9/11, we started hearing a lot about security and what we heard about then was homeland security. So we had all kinds of bills and things being introduced in the United States and in Canada dealing with what we call homeland security. And then now another term that you hear a lot that we didn't hear a few years ago is food security. And I think food security means a lot of things to a lot of different people. We see this government committing money along with the Potash Corporation to establishing a food security agency or institute at the University of Saskatchewan.

We also hear a lot of people talk about food security when it comes to poverty issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and how I think when we want to talk about a healthy society and what that might look like, we have to talk about people's access to food. And various studies have shown that if people have a stable and secure access to food, other things flow from that in terms of proper housing and proper education and all the other things that flow when we have all the determinants of health looked after. So security, the word security itself is just a word. And what's being proposed here is to change the name of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, which brings to mind a certain image. I mean, we know what a watershed is. When we fly over Saskatchewan we can see the watersheds there, the actual physical geographic features. So we know what a watershed is. And this authority since its inception has been dealing with the flow of water through the watersheds in Saskatchewan. Obviously the watershed corporation, or Saskatchewan Water Corporation, was hived off of that agency a few years back, and it has its own purpose as a Crown corporation now. But we had the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority; I think people had a sense and an understanding of what its responsibilities were.

I've spoken often in the Assembly here about concerns that this authority isn't able to meet its legislative obligations to protect citizens from illegal drainage, for example. And we had people here in the legislature last year that demonstrated the kind of damaging effects that can happen downstream when people are illegally draining. Unfortunately we haven't seen any real action on the part of this government. We know the previous minister wrote a letter to farmers asking them not to do it. I don't know how that's worked out for them. I don't hear that it's actually succeeded in reducing the number of drainage ditches, nor mitigating the damage that's been done by those that have already been drained. The backlog is immense, and in fact I think it's maybe insurmountable at this point in time because there's simply no political will on the part of this government to deal with that particular issue.

So when we talk about Watershed Authority, and then we see the minister wanting to change the name to water security, we have to wonder what the intention is behind the semantics, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This raises a lot of concerns. Does this minister just want to bring it into terms with food security and homeland security and provide that sort of comfort to the people of Saskatchewan that maybe their water is now secure because we've changed the name? I'm not sure the people of Saskatchewan are going to understand that or even recognize what the heck is the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency.

And I actually asked the minister, why agency and not authority? And he said, well, because. So it seems a bit strange that we would take the time in the legislature to make these changes, but the minister, that seemed important to him at the time. What he said when he rose to speak to the bill, he said, "... I wish to mention briefly the concept of the Water Security Agency." He said, the concept itself has been developed among the world's water experts for the last ten years, and water security refers to ensuring sustainable water supplies to support our society's needs. So now, rather than protecting the watershed itself, it looks like the intent is to protect water.

Unfortunately I don't think that's what we're seeing because many of the industrial projects that we see coming forward seem to be a huge drain on our water resources. We see what's happening in Alberta with the development of the bitumen there in the tar sands or the oil sands, and the concerns that are being raised in northern Alberta about the quality of the water because of the industrial development.

We have heard plenty of concerns on this side of the border about the use of water for things like the potash mines that use water-saline solution to produce the potash, and what happens to the water once it's contaminated. How is that water restored? So despite the fact that we are calling it water security, I think there are more demands on the security of our water because of the extensive industrial development and perhaps the lack of baseline knowledge about what the current status of the watersheds should be. And we're not sure that just because you change the name that it means the water's secure. So there could be a disconnect there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because although the minister has introduced his 25-year water security plan, what we're hearing from people on the ground is they don't feel all that secure.

Certainly in terms of the illegal drainage issues that this ministry has simply done nothing about — allowing people to suffer in silence or take it out with their neighbours, which is actually not the Saskatchewan way — we need some support from the government. And this is a ministry that has lost staff. They simply don't have the resources to deal with the backlogs that exist, and that's something that's very concerning.

[20:45]

And I want to go back a little bit to water security in the sense of a healthy society, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And last week I was very pleased to be invited to attend part of the We Day in Saskatoon. And it was mentioned in the members' statements where 15,000 young Saskatchewan people came together to celebrate their work that they've done to bring water security to countries like Kenya, where young girls are not able to go to school because they have to walk to get water all day and then come home with the water that's needed to survive. So those are the kinds of things I think that have inspired not just Saskatchewan youth but I think anyone who's come into contact with this particular program. and it shows the empowerment of a community when water is secure.

Building a well. I have an uncle, he's well into his 80s now. And he was born in southern Saskatchewan and did ministry work in Africa as a young man, came back to Canada, raised his family. But when his wife died of Alzheimer's about 10 years

ago he went back to Kenya, and he's showing people there how to build wells. And this is bringing security, water security, to those families and those communities, and he's just doing it with the basic, kind of rudimentary well-digging methods that are available to those people so that they who have nothing, literally nothing when it comes to that, other than a bucket to carry their water in if they have to walk. So that's the kind of work I think that the We Day celebrates and certainly gives hope for those people in those communities.

Here in Saskatchewan we have so much water, and it is so amply provided for us, and not just in Saskatchewan but in Canada. We have 100,000 lakes in Saskatchewan. You know, you could fish every day in a different lake for 100 years and still not reach all the lakes that we have. So it's the abundance of richness that we have here. And I think maybe we can take it for granted to a certain extent, but we know with climate change and all the things that is happening in the environment that there could be risks.

And when I worked with the federal government for a number of years, certainly the arrangements between Canada and the United States, we saw the Rafferty-Alameda dam being constructed and all the water, the trade agreement when it comes to water. I know there is considerable concern out there in the populace about the security of our water and whether or not through the trade agreements that exist whether we even have water security anymore.

Those kind of questions weren't addressed in the 25-year plan. I did read through the plan or I tried to read through it, but I found it was heavy on words but light on substance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And although the minister spoke glowingly about the goals of the plan, I just feel that in many ways it was words on paper. So we will be looking and trying to hold this government to account for that plan and ensure that if they are going to call it the Water Security Agency, that they are talking about water security and not about ways to divert it into overuse in one particular area and damaging the environment in other areas.

So he went into detail about what the Water Security Agency is mandated to do. And I think it's changing the goals and the previous goals of the Watershed Authority Act or the Watershed Authority, but he's now saying that the agency "... is mandated to ensure protection of water quality, maintenance of aquatic habitats, and sustainable water supplies."

I think what we would look to here is how is the minister planning to do that? And if he is going to continue to withdraw services and cut staff in the environmental area, monitoring and enforcement and compliance are always the areas that seem to be immediately affected when governments want to look for cuts and efficiencies in the public service. So we know that the numbers of staff in the ministry have declined, and we've certainly seen it in terms of their ability to look at complaints regarding illegal drainage. And we're not sure that if the government says this is our goal, but if they don't really put the manpower behind it to ensure that it happens, we're not sure that they'll be able to meet their goals in the enforcement of the bill.

So he goes on to say that:

The Water Security Agency brings together for the first time all of government's core water management responsibilities and technical expertise to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to water management.

And he said what they're going to do is bring together staff and programs from the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Health, and all the responsibilities and staff from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

So it sounds like a pumped up watershed authority, that there's going to be an inflation of the resources that are going to be available to the agency. We're certainly going to want to ask a lot of questions about that in committee when this bill does get moved to committee. Because I think that's where the proof is in the pudding: if the plan is to bring all these, what he calls core water management responsibilities and technical expertise, if he actually brings that together and shows us and demonstrates to us how this new agency is going to better do the work that the Watershed Authority wasn't able to do.

So he's going on to say that it's going to provide a stronger focus on water issues. Again this may be just words. We're not sure exactly how he's going to do that. He's going to have regulatory authority in this agency over water supply including water allocations, water quality, municipal drinking water and waste water systems, and similar large private systems, work such as dams and channels, drainage is there in protection of aquatic habitat.

I know that when the new solution potash mine is coming on stream, there's two or three that are coming in that are going to be draining water from the Qu'Appelle Valley water system. And what we're told, Mr. Speaker, is that this government's view of how to protect the water supply there is simply to let more water through the Gardiner dam to replenish the Qu'Appelle Valley, the Qu'Appelle River.

And then you have to think about where does the aquifer, the Diefenbaker aquifer get its water from. You go further upstream and we see it comes from Alberta and we know that the source for those rivers is depleting as well. The glaciers, it's clear, are depleting and that in fact there may not be a steady supply of water for much longer. So without factoring in climate change, it's difficult to see how the agency will be able to manage the allocations and the work, the dams and channels that have been established to date. So it's all part of a bigger picture and, you know, it ties in with food security. So we need to see the government's approach to this on a much more global scale, although obviously we are limited to the geographic boundaries of Saskatchewan. The notion of securing our water is intricately tied with all the water systems that feed into our geographical boundaries.

So we're going to have to watch from this side of the House to see how this government plans to achieve the goals it set out in this plan. He's talking about a number of principles that the plan establishes. He says the plan is going to have a long-term perspective, and he indicated he doesn't shy away from setting goals and having a long-term perspective. We're glad he's not afraid to shy away from that and we certainly look forward to how he will meet those long-term goals. He is talking about

water for future generations. Again that ties into the long-term goal. He's looking at an integrated approach to management. That's again, kind of motherhood types of statements. Partnerships and participation are other things he talks about. Shared responsibility. Continuous improvement. So those are all good words, Mr. Speaker, and they are all are lofty words for a minister to be putting out in this type of 25-year water security plan. But I think, as I said earlier, the proof will be in the pudding or, in this case, in the pond. And we'll see what happens with the plan once he starts implementing it.

He says the plan provides guidance to all of government on work related to water. So he's saying the work is going to be directed to achieving those seven goals that he talked about earlier. And he was talking about the day he released the goal on the South Saskatchewan River in sunny Saskatoon in October. It was a lovely day. And I think that's the kind of day where we have hope, where we think that maybe it is possible to achieve these goals.

So again from this side of the House, we are just going to watch and pay attention to this. We're going to ask questions in committee, and we're going to hold this government to the promises that it's made to the people.

So I think at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that would be the extent of our comments from this side of the House on this Bill 47. We know we have a new name. We don't know exactly how that's going to look, but at this point we're going to be able to ask those questions in committee and I would like to refer this bill to the committee at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 47, *The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Agreed. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 20:56.]

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