



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

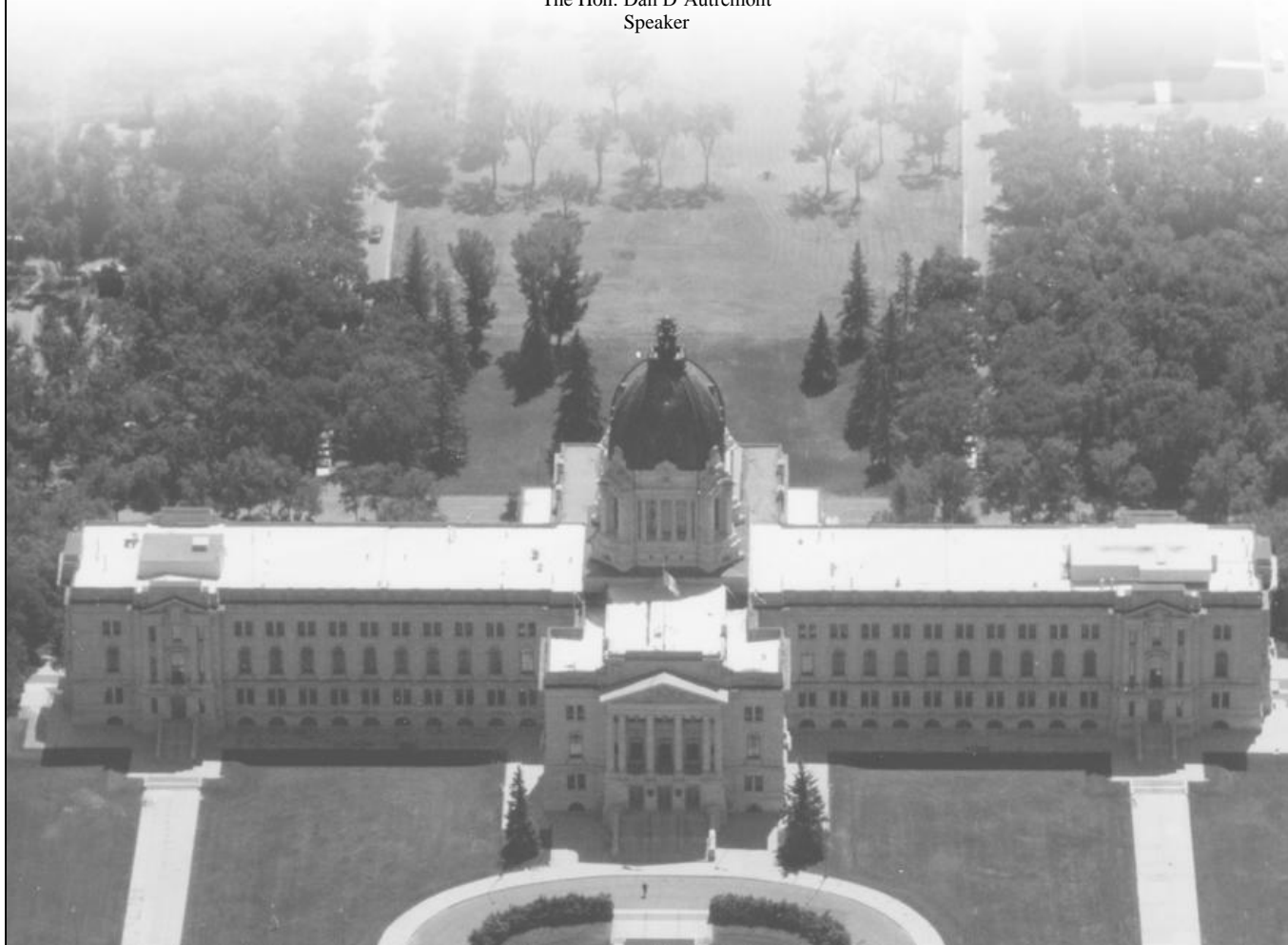
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to you to my colleagues, I request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The Premier has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues for that leave. It's a pleasure to introduce you to some very special guests who have joined us today in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. We've had a number of ambassadors come through the province of Saskatchewan already early on in this session and certainly in the fall session. I think it speaks to a great deal . . . I hope it speaks to a great deal of interest from the international community into what's going on in the province and what's going to continue to happen here in Saskatchewan.

But today joining us in your gallery is His Excellency Werner Wnendt, the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Canada. Accompanying the ambassador today is Ms. Barbara Hoggard-Lulay of Saskatoon, whom we met I think yesterday, is the honorary consul for Germany, Mr. Speaker. We welcome her back. Also Melinda Carter and Laurie Hutton, two officials from the government's protocol office, have joined us as well. Ambassador Wnendt is in Saskatchewan this week to meet with government representatives, members of our business community, and University of Saskatchewan officials.

Mr. Speaker, this is the ambassador's first visit to the province. We want to assure him though that usually things are a little bit different in April weather-wise, and that it's actually possible to, if you're interested, to enjoy the outdoors to a greater extent than we might be able to in this particular week of April, Mr. Speaker.

We're pleased he could visit the province because of the strong and historic ties between Germany, the people of Germany and our province. Immigrants, as we noted yesterday, from Germany settled this province in great numbers, Mr. Speaker. Their hard work and determination helped lay the foundation for the province itself, for the prosperity that we enjoy today. Mr. Speaker, fully 30 per cent of our population claims German heritage, and the number is growing. In the last five years, almost 800 German immigrants have come to our province to build a life here and we're very glad they have chose to come to Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan also has strong commercial relationships, ties with Germany. Exports from our province have averaged about \$40 million annually, mainly agricultural products: legumes, oilseeds, wheat. And German goods have come the other way as well, Mr. Speaker, a number of different goods, probably the highest profile of which would be cars. And there seems to be more and more BMWs and Mercedes in Saskatchewan today, also a sign of perhaps some economic opportunity that exists here.

Mr. Speaker, Germans are also investing in Saskatchewan. Not long ago we had a chance to welcome K+S to the legislature. They of course are planning and developing the first new potash mine in our province in about 40 years. And so we want to, through the ambassador, thank the people of Germany for the ties that bind our province and our country and theirs. We want to thank them for being great customers of things that we produce here and we want to also thank them for the investment that's coming into our resource sector from their country.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming His Excellency to the legislature today.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Premier in welcoming Ambassador Wnendt to Saskatchewan today, as well as Ms. Barbara Hoggard-Lulay.

I enjoyed the conversation we had this morning, talking about some of the history and the relationship between Saskatchewan and Germany. And so I wish them all the best as they carry on their discussions here in the province over the next day or so. And I wish the ambassador all the best, as he is still fairly early on in his term here in Canada, and I hope that it is a memorable time in his career within the diplomatic service for his country. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these two important individuals to the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly I would like to introduce the mayor of Tisdale, His Worship Al Jellicoe, and Perry Trusty who is the director of economic development for the town of Tisdale. And I would like to welcome them to their Assembly.

And with them, Mr. Speaker, is a Chinese delegation who came in looking to have the possibility of putting a biomass power plant over in Tisdale. We have Mr. — and if you'd just give a wave when I say your name — Mr. Ma Cheng Guo who is the CEO [chief executive officer] of Heilongjiang Double Boiler Company; Mr. Jacky Yang who is a coordinator there; and Ms. Cathy Ge, manager of the international projects. So we'd also like to welcome them to this Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to

join with the member from Carrot River to welcome these guests to our Assembly, business leaders from China. I hope you enjoy your visit. Welcome to your Assembly.

And I also welcome His Worship Mayor Jellicoe from Tisdale as well as Mr. Perry Trusty, economic development officer. Thank you so much for the work each of you do to our province in our region, in the Northeast. And of course there's such great opportunities through that region, and they're being fulfilled by work of individuals like yourselves. So I welcome the mayor of Tisdale, Perry Trusty, and business leaders from China here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — I request leave for an extended introduction, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce some of Saskatchewan's long-serving volunteer crop reporters who are seated in your gallery. They are here today to be recognized for their commitment and service to the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan. These crop reporters have reached significant milestones of 25, 30, and 35 years of service. Each week for at least 30 weeks a year, these individuals have collected information for the ministry. From seeding to harvest, they provide valuable reports about crop development and progress and precipitation in their rural municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, their work delivers a timely and accurate crop report for all of the producers in the province. I want to recognize and thank these individuals for their dedication to the Saskatchewan crop reporting service. I would ask the crop reporters and their spouses to stand as I announce their names.

The 30-year recipients are Murray Janis, RM [rural municipality] of Glen Bain and his wife, Penny, who could not be here today; Keith Stacey, RM of Moose Range, and his wife, Eunice. The 35-year recipients are Glen and Elizabeth MacKenzie, RM of Pinto Creek; Dave Ehman, RM of Craik, and his wife, Irene.

There are some crop reporters and spouses who were not able to attend today: 25-year award recipient Campbell Smith, RM of Shamrock, and his wife, Mearl; and 30-year award recipients Lawrence Beckie, RM of McCraney, and his wife, Margaret; George Fast, RM of Rosemount, and his wife, Mildred; 35-year award recipient, Cecil and Mary Reimer, RM of Barrier Valley. I would ask all members to join me in recognizing these crop reporters for their valuable volunteer service to the province and welcome them to their legislature.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to extend congratulations to those of you with these significant milestones in your career and for the many, many, many years of service to the people of Saskatchewan. Your work is valuable and critical to the success of the farming industry here in the province. So on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome you to your legislature and congratulate you on a job well done.

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I have the honour of introducing some very important guests from Habitat for Humanity Canada with us today. Joining us today are the president and CEO, Kevin Marshman, and vice-president of government relations and advocacy, Jason Kuzminski.

President Marshman is somewhat new to his position. In fact I believe he became the president on March the 11th of this year. And I want to congratulate him on his new role. And Jason was born and raised and educated right here in Saskatchewan, so to you I would like to say, welcome home.

I am also pleased that we have a number of volunteers who willingly donate their time and their energy to Habitat for Humanity. First of all everybody knows Dennis Coutts. Welcome to your legislature. We have Barb Cox-Lloyd, executive director for Habitat for Humanity in Saskatoon; Rowena Eddy, the Chair of the board of directors on Habitat on the Border, Lloydminster. We have Vivian Pengelly, the executive director of Habitat on the Border of Lloydminster; Morris Sawchuk, the board of directors Habitat for Humanity, Prince Albert. We have a Moose Jaw representative, Dominguez . . . I guess are not here. We have Laurie Renton, the past Chair of Habitat for Humanity, Yorkton here as well.

In the member's statement later, we'll be elaborating on the great work that Habitat for Humanity does. But personally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Habitat for Humanity for the wonderful work they do right across Saskatchewan and right across Canada. The strong partnership we have here in Saskatchewan is bringing real, lasting benefits for the hard-working people of our province and the communities. And I'd ask that all members join me in welcoming these dedicated individuals from Habitat for Humanity into this legislature. Thank you.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the minister in recognizing the folks from Habitat for Humanity and the folks right across Canada and the good work they do, and the folks here in the province. And I can't see Barb from Saskatoon — she's around the corner — but they do spectacular work in helping out people who are in real need of shelter. And their work is admirable, and we want to acknowledge that good work. So I join the minister in welcoming them to their legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, two guests that are joining us in your gallery.

First, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Kim Camboia is a patient adviser from Saskatoon. Kim's daughter Aleina has cystic fibrosis, and Kim has participated in several lean improvement events in the Saskatoon Health Region. And she'll as well be participating in this week's health quality summit here in Regina, and we look forward to her continued work in quality improvement in the patient experience.

As well, Mr. Speaker, joining her in your gallery as well is Dr. Corrine Jabs who is head of obstetrics and gynecology here at Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. She as well will be speaking at the Health Quality Council about an innovative scheduling option called pooled referrals. Mr. Speaker, since offering pooled referrals, Dr. Jabs and her colleagues have cut wait times for their patients by as much as 50 per cent. And we thank Dr. Jabs, Mr. Speaker, for her involvement and her leadership in quality improvement and continuous improvement. And I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the members I'd like to introduce a long-time family friend who's seated in your gallery, Eddie Gadette. Eddie lives here in Regina but farms out in the, I guess you'd say Riceton-Lewvan area, which most people wouldn't know where that was, but happens to farm very, very close to where we had our farm. Eddie became a very good friend many, many years ago when his truck used to pull into the P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] in Lewvan where he delivered an awful lot of loads of grain to my dad who was a grain buyer at that time. So he has been a good family friend and helped at the farm for sure. We worked back and forth a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like all members to welcome Eddie, for the first time, to his Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join in with the Minister of Social Services to welcome one of the Habitat people here today, Ms. Laurie Renton from Yorkton. Laurie does much above and beyond Habitat. She's very involved in business and in so many areas of the community, it would take a long time to describe. I'd just like all members to help me in welcoming Laurie Renton to her Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on cellphone coverage. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

To undertake, as soon as possible, to ensure SaskTel delivers cell service to the Canoe Lake First Nations, along with the adjoining communities of Cole Bay and Jans Bay; Buffalo River First Nations, also known as Dillon, and the neighbouring communities of Michel Village and St. George's Hill; English River First Nations, also known as Patuanak, and the hamlet of Patuanak; and Birch Narrows First Nations along with the community of Turnor Lake, including the neighbouring communities in each of these areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are primarily from Turnor Lake. And I so present.

[13:45]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the reconsideration of passing Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. We know since the Act was introduced in December, literally hundreds of hours of study and comparison have been carried out in the interest of due diligence. And there is no labour relations crisis to fix and no necessity to rush through this omnibus bill that will likely govern workplace relations for decades to come. And if Bill 85 does become the new consolidation of labour laws in the province, working people, particularly young workers, immigrant workers, and other vulnerable workers, will suffer from a hasty watering down of our current labour standards which set the mandatory minimums for all Saskatchewan workers. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to not pass Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* in this current session before the end of May and to place it on a much longer legislative track to ensure greater understanding and support for the new labour law.

I do so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Public Relations Campaign

Mr. McCall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party spin machine is at it again. Once more we have the Saskatchewan Party government using public money for political spin and putting politicians ahead of people when it comes to spending.

Earlier this year we found out that the Premier spent around 100,000 taxpayer dollars on advertisements telling taxpayers the government is low on taxpayer dollars. The ads warned that everyone would have to live with some cutbacks.

Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Sask Party government spent another \$210,000 on another PR [public relations] and

spin advertising campaign — \$210,000 of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. The campaign aims at telling students and citizens how great the government is when it comes to post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, this adds insult to injury. Post-secondary students are having their tuition jacked up again this year. Classes and programs are being cut. Wait-lists persist. Sessional lecturers have been laid off, and universities are facing unprecedented debt levels.

This government does not have a comprehensive, sustainable, smart growth plan for Saskatchewan post-secondary education. What do we have instead? A \$210,000 manipulative PR campaign paid for by the very students and families who deserve better.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks one of the most important military engagements in Canadian history. On April the 9th, 1917, at 5:30 a.m., the Canadian Corps undertook a mission to secure a strategic 7-kilometre area in France known as Vimy Ridge.

Canadian soldiers fought for Vimy Ridge for four days, but this was not without a price. There were more than 10,600 casualties. Of those, approximately 3,600 sacrificed their lives. Mr. Speaker, as we know, brave Canadian troops captured Vimy Ridge and this was hailed as the first Allied success in the war.

Mr. Speaker, 96 years ago to this day Canadian troops selflessly put their lives on the line at Vimy Ridge to ensure our freedom, and it is imperative that all Canadians continue to remember this. That is why I wish to encourage all Canadians to remember the sacrifice and bravery during the battle at Vimy Ridge. It's especially important to encourage young Canadians to preserve the memory of those who serve Canada by defending our values of peace, freedom, and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in commemorating and extending gratitude to all of those who fought to successfully secure Vimy Ridge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Equal Pay Day

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Equal Pay Day. In Saskatchewan, women on average earn \$3.57 less an hour than men. We're one of the provinces with the largest gap in average wages between men and women. Women are twice as likely to be engaged in low-waged work and more likely to be working part-time. For women working full-time in Canada, they are making on average 76 per cent of what men earn.

These differences in wages contribute to what is known as the feminization of poverty. Women are more likely to be poor, and

these factors increase if women face additional barriers due to discrimination because of Métis or First Nations identity, living with a disability, or being a lone parent.

Addressing the gender wage gap is a complex problem but there are a few common sense solutions that have been demonstrated to be effective. Unions are one path to pay equality for women. Women working full-time in unions are paid 95 per cent of what their male colleagues are paid. Affordable, accessible, and publicly funded child care can also be a ramp to equality for women, allowing them the freedom to work or pursue education while paying child care workers a living wage. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government has stubbornly refused to address either of these two solutions.

Bill 85 is being pushed through without adequate consultation and will undermine women's rights in the workplace and ultimately impact their right to pay equity. This government also refuses to address current challenges with child care subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members of the House to join with me in recognizing Equal Pay Day, and I challenge my colleagues to work towards the addressing the gender wage gap in Saskatchewan.

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

Government Partners With Habitat for Humanity

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to rise in the House to share some great news about wonderful work that Habitat for Humanity is doing in the partnership with our government.

Mr. Speaker, a home represents security, a sense of belonging, and a place where you can become proud, connected members of our community. However some families need help achieving this goal. Habitat for Humanity steps in by helping to build homes for families who could not otherwise afford them.

Like Habitat for Humanity, Mr. Speaker, our government believes that everybody deserves to have a home. This morning the Minister of Social Services and Habitat for Humanity celebrated \$2 million in additional support that was just announced in this year's budget. This \$2 million is double the support provided to Habitat last year and leads the country in percentage increased. Most importantly, this funding will help another 40 families realize the home ownership dream.

I'm also proud to announce that Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is providing \$600,000 in funding to Habitat through the Summit Action Fund. Mr. Speaker, this funding will allow Habitat to purchase and develop land in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert to build another 39 to 49 units for deserving families across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Habitat for Humanity for the difference they make in the lives of Saskatchewan families. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Melfort Supports Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the city of Melfort and surrounding area on their second annual STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] benefit gala. One hundred and seventy-eight people attended this and had a fabulous meal as well as a silent and live auction. And once again the people of the Melfort constituency stood out with their generosity and enthusiasm and raised \$30,000 for STARS.

Melissa Kreutzweiser of Naicam was a guest speaker at the benefit, recalling her son's experience, her son Austin's experience with the lifesaving rescue by STARS after he was in a terrifying head-on collision in northern Alberta. When he woke up that day, the day of the accident, he said to his mom, something bad is going to happen. And I am so pleased to tell you today that after six years, five years he was there, he was healthy, and he was strong.

On the fundraising side, following a unique Melfort tradition, Councillor Glenn George donated a brand new \$50 bill to the auctioneer. The auctioneer then took that \$50 bill and auctioned it off. Now Glenn is a good person. He's a good friend, but he's not a rock star. And yet the bidding hit \$200. It hit 300, 400, 500, and it ended up at \$700 for a \$50 bill. That's amazing generosity.

I would like the House to join with me in thanking the Melfort support STARS committee and the Melfort constituency for once again hosting a very successful event.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Three Lakes Girls' Avengers Win Basketball Silver

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in this Assembly today to share a recent sports story from my hometown. Mr. Speaker, it's about the Three Lakes School 1A girls' basketball team. Last month the Three Lakes Avengers competed in the annual Hoopla basketball tournament in Saskatoon which featured the top high school basketball teams from across the province.

The team, coached by Trevor Otsig, was seeded fifth going into the tournament, but upset number one ranked Regina 78-74 in the semifinal, putting them in the gold medal game. The Avengers came home with a silver medal after being narrowly defeated by Kenaston in a hard-fought game. This is an impressive feat for this group of girls, Mr. Speaker, as they were a younger team this year and really held their own against the older teams. In the last seven years the Avengers have qualified to play at Hoopla five times, winning four silver medals and a bronze. The Avengers hope to bring home the gold for the first time next year. I'd like all members to join me in congratulating the Three Lakes Avengers on a great season and another successful Hoopla tournament. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Social Media Accounts

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks a lot about elevating the level of political discourse in Saskatchewan, but like Dwain Lingenfelter, he says one thing but does another.

Recently someone started a Twitter account and a Tumblr account called — and I can't actually say the word because it's unparliamentary — Bleep Sask Party MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Say. Like many things on the Internet, both of these accounts were being run anonymously, but every once in a while someone messes up and gives up who is really running these anonymous accounts.

That's what happened last week when an NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus staffer accidentally tweeted a link to Bleep Sask Party MLAs Say from her own personal account. She immediately realized her mistake, deleted this tweet, and then one minute later sent the exact same tweet from the Bleep Sask Party MLAs Say account. But the damage was already done.

Not only is Bleep Sask Party MLAs Say being run out of the NDP caucus office, it's also being done with the support of everyone from the chief of staff on down.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP likes to talk about transparency and accountability. If the NDP wants to run a Twitter account called Bleep Sask Party MLAs Say out of their caucus office, they should at least be transparent about it.

Will the Leader of the Opposition practise what he preaches? Does he approve of these anonymous accounts being run out of his caucus office? I guess we're going to find out.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Quality of Care for Seniors

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Several months ago, the daughter of a woman in long-term care wrote a letter to the Sask Party government about conditions she observes regularly in her mother's care facility. The letter said, "I've seen too many instances of other residents falling, being left on toilets unattended for hours, and calls for help going largely unresponded to."

My question to the Premier: does he think that such poor quality of care is acceptable for our province's seniors?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want the best care for our seniors, whether they're in institutions that we have around the province in long-term care facilities or whether they're being taken care of by front-line professionals, perhaps through home care initiatives.

We want the best for patients right across the system. We launched, early on in our government's term, the patient-first

initiative. Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of work to do, Mr. Speaker, when we became government in 2007. We needed the right complement of front-line workers in the first place. We were short, according to the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, 1,000 nurses, and so we began there. And I'm happy to report to the House that we do now have over 1,000 more nurses working. We were short doctors. We now have more doctors working. Mr. Speaker, we needed new facilities in long-term care — 13 under construction today, Mr. Speaker.

There's always more that can be done. And not knowing the specific details of the case that's being raised, something that I'd be prepared to look into, I'm also prepared to stand for the record of this government in terms of health care, acknowledging that there's more work to be done but that very important investments have been made in people that provide the care and the facilities where the care is given.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The woman who wrote the letter to the Sask Party government has also told us that her mother has been denied much-needed baths. And SEIU [Service Employees International Union] West has confirmed that in some cases residents have missed their tub bath for three to four weeks because of chronic understaffing in the facility, Mr. Speaker.

In fact all of these concerns about quality of care are a result of inadequate staffing levels in health care, Mr. Speaker: seniors falling, seniors being left on toilets unattended for hours, seniors' calls for help not being responded to properly, and seniors missing their baths, Mr. Speaker, in some instances for up to three to four weeks, all because of significant understaffing. The letter the government received from the concerned daughter of the woman in long-term care says, "The level of care provided, given the current caregiver ratio at Sunset, is dangerously inadequate."

My question to the Premier: does he agree that we have to do much better in terms of seniors' care, or is he satisfied with the situation of seniors missing much-needed baths for periods of three to four weeks?

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, you have heard ministers on this side of the House, you've heard this government say repeatedly, because it's true, that we should always be seeking to improve care for people in the system, for all patients, and especially for seniors, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen action from this side of the House with respect to seniors' care in the current budget, a home care pilot project, one I think that the hon. member supports. You've seen from this government the actual construction of new long-term care beds, after 1,600-plus or in that range were closed by members opposite when they sat on this side of the House. Mr. Speaker, you've seen this side of the House make extensive investments in front-line personnel so we have the right complement, not just of nurses, not just of doctors, but of others that provide the

care.

We would be concerned about any individual case that's raised as depicted by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's questions. But, Mr. Speaker, we do have a record — a record of caring for seniors. And it's not just in health care. It's also in the low-income seniors' assistance plan that for 16 years was ignored by members opposite, and now on this side of the House has been increased I think in almost every single budget we've introduced.

Mr. Speaker, there is more work to be done, but we stand by our record, both for seniors and for patients right across the health care system.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, Carrie Klassen is the woman that wrote the letter to government, and she visits her mother in a care facility here in Regina every day. She has joined with us in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker, because she wants to see improvements to the level of care for her mother and the level of care for many other Saskatchewan seniors. Here's what else Carrie had to say in her letter to the government: "In many ways what I have witnessed as a concerned family member is heartbreaking. I see other needy residents who I fear do not have an active advocate on their side fighting for resources to help them."

My question to the Premier: why is the situation so heartbreaking for Carrie and her family, and what does he have to say to the many families or to the many individuals in care, Mr. Speaker, who don't have a strong advocate like Carrie fighting on their behalf for resources?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is certainly an area that we take very seriously as a government, and certainly leaders within the health sector take this issue of quality improvement and continuous improvement within the health care system very seriously, Mr. Speaker. We are not satisfied when we hear stories like this, Mr. Speaker, and experiences from our patients, particularly our seniors. In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's why we've embarked upon a journey of continuous improvement within the health care system.

In fact just this week alone in Regina, over 600 health care providers, leaders, administrators, and patient representatives will be meeting in the city of Regina to discuss continuous improvement within the health care system so we can get to the point where we not just reduce, Mr. Speaker, but eliminate defects within the system, within the health care system. And certainly I'd be very pleased to meet after question period and hear first-hand the concerns that the Leader of the Opposition is raising.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time we've heard about concerns in care facilities for seniors. It was last December that the Provincial Auditor released a report citing problems with care for seniors, including in some instances the

absence of hand soap for seniors. And we've heard personal stories, Mr. Speaker, about how inadequate staffing levels are affecting the level of care that seniors are receiving here in Saskatchewan: issues with seniors falling, issues with seniors being left on toilets unattended for hours, issues like seniors' calls for help not being responded to as they need to be, and issues like baths not being provided for periods of weeks, Mr. Speaker.

As Carrie Klassen's letter to the Sask Party government said, "Decisions regarding levels of care come back to the priorities of politicians." Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear. We need to do so much better in the province when it comes to care for seniors. These types of stories are unacceptable.

My question to the Premier: why has the Sask Party government failed to make care for our seniors a top priority?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that the record would show, particularly with this budget, Mr. Speaker, that we're seeing record levels invested into regional health authorities to be able to provide care for all residents, all patients, clients of our system, Mr. Speaker, including seniors.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of capital, we know that more work needs to be done, but we've invested significant dollars to take care of an infrastructure capital deficit that was left by the members opposite when it comes particularly to seniors' care, Mr. Speaker. As well, we're looking at new and innovative ways to deliver care to seniors and piloting that here within Regina and hope to see success with that program and be able to deliver it beyond.

But, Mr. Speaker, we do take these concerns seriously. That's why, Mr. Speaker, it was this government that put in place within the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman the ability to look into specifically to health care cases, something which wasn't offered to members opposite. But I'm certainly willing to look further at the concerns that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the member that's joining us in the gallery.

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

Workplace Fatalities

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's Workers' Compensation Board annual report shows the province is moving in the wrong direction when it comes to workplace fatalities. In 2012 WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] recorded 60 fatalities across the province in every age group, in every sector. Mr. Speaker, this is the highest number of fatalities at workplaces in our province in over 30 years. Mr. Speaker, obviously the province needs to do more to make sure when people go to work, their jobs are safe.

To the minister: why does the province have the highest number of workplace fatalities in over 30 years?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced

Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every workplace death is a tragedy, not just for the worker, but for the workplace and for the family members of the worker. The number of fatalities that we see in our province is a reminder to all of us that we need to be vigilant in our workplaces. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of people that are killed in the workplace, and I think I can offer condolences on behalf of all members in the House. One of the worst and saddest days in the legislature is the Day of Mourning where we read out the names of the people who lost their lives in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, I can provide some context for the information that we have regarding workplace fatalities, but I want to point out to the House and to the public that even one workplace fatality is too much and by putting the numbers in context should not be seen as an excuse.

We have 19 of the fatalities are due to exposure. This is due to long-term exposure to asbestos; often that took place many decades ago. We have created a mandatory asbestos registry, and I thank the members opposite for their participation in that. People will know that buildings which contain asbestos, where it is in the buildings. We have 10 motor vehicle and airplane fatalities. We formed an all-party committee to study traffic-related accidents and appointed the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton to be the Legislative Secretary in that area. We've done other things as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the number of deaths in this last year is not only the highest in the last 30 years, it's nearly double the number of fatalities from last year. And the report spells out the problem clearly. It says, and I quote, "Saskatchewan holds the frightening position of being second worst in Canada for workplace injuries and has the highest number of overall injuries outside the workplace."

When the fatalities increase and the WCB misses its target for total injury rate, there is a glaring problem in safety in our work sites across our province. To the minister: what has been the measurable impact of Mission: Zero if the rate of fatalities is increasing?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member opposite that Mission: Zero is part of the workplace safety program done by Workers' Compensation Board. It has worked with workers and with employers to have plans in place, protocols in place to drive down the injury rate. Although we are the second highest in the country, our numbers have on injuries dropped down, and we've had a significant drop in our lost-time injuries. And I say that not to take away from the fatalities that are there.

Mr. Speaker, I was mentioning earlier some of the numbers, and I will provide a few more. We had, as part of that 60, 15 of them were people that died from heart attacks at work. That's an increase from five at work. We know that we need to do

more work with the overall health of all of our citizens.

In addition to that, we've reviewed and updated the legislation regarding OHS [occupational health and safety], which is now part of Bill 85. I would like to ask the members opposite to support that legislation when it goes through.

We've provided better protection for late-night retail workers. We use video cameras. We've got safe cash handling procedures. We have a check-in system and personal emergency transmitters. We have taken a great deal of progress in that area, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are real people who've lost their lives at work. It's a real tragedy for the province, and the stats are alarming. WCB said there were five youth fatalities, all of which were killed by a motor vehicle accident in the workplace. A quarter of the fatalities happen on construction sites. And, Mr. Speaker, WCB said 14 of the fatalities were related to asbestos exposure.

Clearly the province needs to take real action, real action to lower these fatalities. What is the minister's plan to make Mission: Zero more than just a commercial? What's the plan to lower the number of fatalities in our workplaces, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I will go on with some of the stats. At 2.79 per cent, the time-loss injury rate is at its lowest rate level in 20 years. We've added three additional OHS workers. We've increased safety and prevention costs from 18.2 million in 2011 to 19.8 in 2012. Safety association funding has increased 15.6 per cent to \$8.9 million. OHS has increased to 9.5 million from 9.2 million.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work left to do in this area, and it's incredibly discouraging to see numbers that are going the wrong way. Mr. Speaker, we share the concerns of the members opposite, and I'm sure of every workplace. And a lot of the employers have talked to us, want to work harder to do a better job in that area as well. Even one is one too many, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the province needs actions to prevent workplace fatalities, not just commercials telling people to be safe at work. Mr. Speaker, the government has an opportunity in front of them today. They could be boosting up, strengthening the occupational health and safety provisions in the provincial labour laws, but we're seeing a watering down about other workplace legislation.

Mr. Speaker, why has the government not taken workplace safety as seriously as it seems to be caring about rewriting 100 years of workplace laws?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we're taking great steps to try and increase the number of fines, to increase the fine limits, to increase the number of prosecutions, and to ramp up prosecution. Workplace safety is more than just enforcement. It's a matter of education. It's a matter of training. It's a shared responsibility.

I'd like to make a quote from the member opposite, when we both attended a College of Law event on March 2nd. The member opposite said:

I agree totally with the minister in terms of occupational health and safety. It's one that we should just really do as much as we can. It was one that as a government we too struggled with and we hoped we could do much more. So I believe we should talk about it specifically and it's really something we can get behind.

I look forward to the member's support as we go through committee on Bill 85, and in particular the safety requirements that are in that piece of legislation.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Saskatchewan Transportation Company Bus Routes

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, today STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] releases its annual report, and that report shows the Sask Party has cut routes to rural communities. Mr. Speaker, the people along these routes are already feeling the effects of being cut off. In Gravelbourg, the town council has written to the Highway Traffic Board to stop the shutting down of that service. They know it will have many negative effects on its seniors, on health care, on businesses, and on the environment.

Mr. Speaker, why would the Sask Party shut down STC routes to rural Saskatchewan when those local communities rely on those services so much?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, STC provides an excellent service around the province. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we know that the subsidy for STC has increased significantly over the last number of years. Roughly about \$1 million was the subsidy for STC a little over 10 years ago. This year we're going to see a subsidy of 9.2 million in operating and about a subsidy of 2.3 for capital. That makes a total of \$11.5 million will be going into a subsidy to STC.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we always need to continue to look at efficiencies and look at the routes that are being delivered throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. When we identified, an STC board had identified three routes that were seeing a usage rate of roughly about one to two passengers per trip, Mr. Speaker, it would only be responsible for the STC board as well as the government to look at such routes and see whether elimination would help the bottom line. We do know that these eliminations will help the bottom line by well over \$300,000 annually.

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, many concerned residents believe the Sask Party government just isn't listening. In Frontier, residents use STC to ship quilts they make for cancer patients. As a charity, they rely on the affordable shipping STC provides to transport these quilts. Now, without STC parcel services, their cost of shipping will go up.

Mr. Speaker, the chairperson of the charity wrote to *The Southwest Booster* newspaper. She said, "This bus provides extremely important functions to the community that have no other public transportation . . ."

Why are rural residents being penalized by the Sask Party government's decision to shut down STC routes?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we certainly realize that by discontinuing these three routes, there may be some impact on residents in those areas. But on the side of courier service, Mr. Speaker, we realize that courier service is offered throughout the province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, of communities of 100 population or more, we service about 250 of those through STC. Two hundred and fifty communities around the province do not have STC service but also have courier service. Mr. Speaker, we believe the private sector will pick up the void left by the STC courier service and be able to deliver whatever parcels to or from those communities that are needed to be transported.

Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that the members have such a concern about the three routes that we are shutting down, depending on what the Highway Traffic Board rules, but had no problem when they shut down 13 routes in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker. Talk about backing away from rural Saskatchewan — that's exactly what the NDP did.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, rural residents are very concerned about the STC cuts. Another writer says, "Depriving this service to these surrounding towns and villages is another step to the demise of these rural Saskatchewan towns and villages."

Mr. Speaker, more and more people are discovering that the Sask Party takes rural and northern residents for granted. The Sask Party shuts down the transportation service that rural people rely on for travel, for health care, and for business growth. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: does the government have any other surprise to rural Saskatchewan? How many other routes will be cut?

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, the subsidy is increasing. We realize that to operate a public transportation

system throughout the province, as do public transportation systems in Regina and Saskatoon, need major subsidies. So does STC. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, it's not a bottomless pit. This year the subsidy is \$11.5 million. We're asking the board, and they've followed through, to look at efficiencies. And those efficiencies have been found, roughly about \$300,000 saving in the next number of years annually, by closing these three routes down.

Mr. Speaker, that's a long cry from what the NDP did when they shut down — talk about surprise — 52 hospitals in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, not to mention 13 busing routes and service centres. Mr. Speaker, we'll take no lessons from the members opposite when it comes to rural Saskatchewan and the respect for rural Saskatchewan that those members had none of.

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

Testing Standards

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has now spent weeks unable to properly answer why the Sask Party government is putting testing ahead of teaching. He also hasn't been able to explain properly what the results of the testing will be used for. Yesterday he finally acknowledged to reporters that the \$5.9 million the Sask Party government plans to spend on standardized testing isn't even including the costs for implementation and, Mr. Speaker, \$5.9 million simply for the computer system.

My question to the Premier: what are the actual costs of implementing standardized testing, and will the school boards be expected to pick up the tab?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's nice to hear members opposite now not refuting the fact that there is a lot of evidence in province today about the benefits of standards-based testing, Mr. Speaker, because there most assuredly is.

There are four very good examples of what has already been achieved in divisions with respect to standards-based testing. There is the literacy project in my division, Chinook School Division, Mr. Speaker, that's seen grade-level reading at 63 per cent four years ago now at over 80 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And resources were found for that — to the credit of Chinook, not from government actually — from the school division. School divisions have identified opportunities to improve results for students by listening to teachers, by supporting teachers, Mr. Speaker. It's that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member's yelling from his seat. He should listen. We want to see those kinds of results for the rest of the province.

Members opposite are ideologically opposed to any basic improvement in these kinds of results if it involves the words standards-based testing, Mr. Speaker. We don't share their ideology. We're going to put a priority in the classroom and students in this province, and, Mr. Speaker, it'll be properly resourced.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we know one of the huge needs in the education system here in Saskatchewan is to close the Aboriginal achievement gap for education, Mr. Speaker. But what do we see from the Sask Party? We see a plan, Mr. Speaker, to spend \$5.9 million on a computer program for standardized testing. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, in the budget we see only \$3 million earmarked for the response to the task force that will be coming forward soon with respect to Aboriginal education and employment here in Saskatchewan. \$5.9 million for a computer system, Mr. Speaker, while only \$3 million to address one of the biggest challenges, one of the biggest opportunities that we have here in the province.

That's not about ideology, Mr. Speaker. That is about a lack of common sense. Saskatchewan people know where resources should be placed. They should be placed in the classroom in order to close the gaps that we have here in Saskatchewan.

My question to the Premier: why \$5.9 million for a computer system on standardized testing while he only has \$3 million to address the recommendations that will be coming forward from the task force?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, one of the most important populations or groups of students that we want to improve, in terms of their education results as a result of standards-based initiative on the part of the government, is First Nations students. That's what the hon. member is missing completely. Student achievement is very much about Aboriginal students in the province. And there are many, as the member would know, I would hope he would know, that are off-reserve.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that investment in student achievement — which is for all students and where we need to do more work on behalf of our young Aboriginal students — in addition to that is another \$3 million we've identified in the budget, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the joint task force with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to improve outcomes for First Nations students. Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the direction the government's going to take.

But the hon. member likes to say, well you're doing student achievement over here. That's only for non-Aboriginal students. Is that the hon. member's position? Of course it isn't. It's for all students in the province.

We want better literacy results for them. We want better numeracy results for them. And in addition to that, we'll put another \$3 million to the JTF [joint task force] for First Nations students in this province. Rather than talking about it like members opposite did, Mr. Speaker, we're going to act.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Student Loan Forgiveness for Nurses and Nurse Practitioners Program

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a

privilege to rise in the House today to talk about another step our government is taking in our commitment to addressing the health care needs of rural Saskatchewan as well as helping to ensure post-secondary education is affordable for students.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the rural family physician recruitment incentive program already announced in March of this year, the Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health announced earlier today the Saskatchewan student loan forgiveness program for nurses and nurse practitioners to encourage nurses and nurse practitioners to work in rural and underserved communities. In conjunction with the federal government's loan forgiveness program for nurses, we are now offering student loan forgiveness up to \$20,000 for nurses and nurse practitioners who choose to practise in communities with populations of 10,000 or less for five years. They will be eligible for forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year of Saskatchewan student loans for five years.

We will also continue to work with the federal government to ensure health professionals who choose to practise in rural communities can also benefit from the federal program, which will forgive federal student loan debt to ensure maximum benefit for our students. This program will be available to nurses who start in a designated community on or after April 1, 2012 and are fully employed for a full year with a minimum of 400 hours in that community. They are also able to work in multiple designated communities.

Mr. Speaker, this was a promise we made in the election platform, and we are very excited to add this new incentive to the long list of supports we have provided to students to make post-secondary education more affordable — a list which includes record investments in post-secondary institutions; loan forgiveness for doctors; the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship; the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings; the graduate retention program, which is the most aggressive youth retention program in the country; and now loan forgiveness for nurses and nurse practitioners.

Mr. Speaker, we believe this exciting new incentive will help address the growing demand for health care professionals in rural communities and help students cover the cost of post-secondary education. This is good news, Mr. Speaker, for rural Saskatchewan, and good news for nurses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd, off the top, thank the minister for forwarding a copy of the comments he just made just before question period.

Again we look at this as sort of a glass half full and a glass half empty at the same time situation, Mr. Speaker. The specific measures themselves should be helpful. We look forward to discussing with stakeholder representations for nurses, for nurse practitioners particularly how this might increase the supply of practitioners in rural and remote communities.

But again, Mr. Speaker, we look at this on the other side of the equation in terms of a system that, when this budget works its

way through the system, becomes less affordable when that opening price in terms of getting through the door in the first place for these educational opportunities becomes higher. And in terms of the program offerings themselves, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing different things in terms of the way the opportunities that are deployed throughout the province are being affected by this budget and by the various hard decisions that have to be made by the respective post-secondary education institutions.

So again, on the one hand it looks to be a good measure, Mr. Speaker. On the other hand, as various decisions that this government has made and the impact that they have on the sector and on students that would be very happy to avail themselves of these opportunities, to see how those impacts work their way through the system, we'll see if this measures up as unqualified good news, Mr. Speaker, or whether or not it's sort of got the legs cut out from underneath it as other decisions that this government has made work their way through the system and work their impact on students' lives.

So we'll be watching very closely, Mr. Speaker. We'll be consulting broadly with the community and certainly talking to nurses and nurse practitioners and the students that desire to take advantage of those opportunities. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude my remarks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 236 to 273.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered questions 236 to 273 inclusive.

Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What is your point of order? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order. It's come to our attention that a social media site called Tumblr has recently had a new account opened up. I won't contaminate the House with the actual title of the account but we can say that it's called Bleep Sask Party MLAs Say.

This account references a number of quotations from government members. The author of this account was seeking to remain anonymous and used the pseudonym of Horse Doctor. Unfortunately for Horse Doctor, a mistake was made in which she revealed her true identity by accidentally posting a comment on the account under her real name. This comment was immediately deleted and reposted one minute later under the name of Horse Doctor. This post was identical to that posted before under the name of Deanna Ogle.

My understanding is that Deanna Ogle is a staff member of the Leader of the Opposition. The question I put before you is the content of one post in particular. This post references and quotes in a negative fashion statements made by Mr. Speaker in his role as Speaker. I would refer Mr. Speaker to Beauchesne's, 6th Edition on page 21, section 71, in which it is stated that "The Speaker should be protected against reflections on his or her actions." The section goes on to reference cases in which commentators commented negatively on rulings or actions of the Speaker in his role as Speaker. These are rulings in which it has been held that such actions are a breach of the Speaker's prerogatives and by extension those of the House.

I would submit that the actions and comments of the staff member of the Leader of the Opposition rise to this level and the point of order should be well taken.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly want to take these comments very seriously and do a full investigation to ensure that the actions of our staff are reviewed, and we'd certainly assist Mr. Speaker in any way he deems necessary to investigate this matter.

The Speaker: — Ladies and gentlemen, this issue should normally be raised as a point of privilege, not as a point of order, as it brings disrepute on the entire membership of the House as represented by the Speaker. If the member who raised this point of order wishes to bring it forward tomorrow in the normal manner as a point of privilege, he may do so and the House will then give it due consideration. So the point of order itself is not well taken.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. That's the member for Athabasca.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 61

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. McMorris that **Bill No. 61 — *The Railway Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into debate this afternoon as it relates to Bill No. 61, *An Act to amend The Railway Act*. I've read through, I've taken time to read through the comments of the minister and the stated intention of this piece of legislation, which seems to be giving local communities a fair process to acquire railways that have been abandoned by rail lines. And certainly

in principle that's something that we're supportive of.

I think in many ways when we look at the gaps that are being filled by local communities and by shortline rails, which have brought together communities and producers and business communities all across our province and pooled together their resources and put together viable plans, it's an important piece of economic activity that's going on within the province. Those shortlines play a very valuable role in linking producers and our product to markets, doing so in an efficient, effective, affordable way and are doing so in the absence of meaningful actions from a federal government, and at times despite the actions of a provincial government, certainly picking up the slack from big rail that often don't have the interests of producers and our local communities in mind.

When I think of, whether it's Last Mountain Railway or Torch River shortline or Great Sand Hills or Carlton Trail — there are so many of these shortlines that operate across this province — I think of those local leaders that have ensured good governance of those shortlines, ensured services are provided to producers within the area, and to ensure that economic benefits are there for local communities.

I certainly support actions and legislation that support those shortlines and the meaningful work that they do. And looking at the current challenges that have been stated by the minister in reading the minister's statements to this House, it's highlighted that the process right now would appear to be less than fair — a circumstance where local municipalities and local individuals, area leaders are forced to be making decisions as it relates to acquisition and purchase of the rail line that's being abandoned by the rail companies. They're having to do that without full information before them such as the very important information as the actual cost to the community or to individuals who are participating. And certainly strengthening this process, making sure that it's transparent, making sure that what's referred to as the net salvage value is able to be related to the area, to the municipalities, to those interested parties at the earliest stage is something that's very important.

So I guess in short I highlight the importance of our shortlines to our province and to our communities. They're picking up the gap and the slack where other levels of government have failed to do so and where big rail has failed to recognize the needs of our communities. I also would like to mention that we should be mindful of Bill C-52 right now that's before the House of Commons. And this is a piece of legislation that was framed around strengthening provisions and fairness for shippers, but it needs to be improved from where it is right now. The bill that's before the House of Commons is one without teeth, one without the proper supports that should be there, and I know there's a strong voice from shippers, from producers in Saskatchewan to ensure that adequate teeth and making sure that that mechanism is there to represent the best interests of producers, of shippers here in this province.

When we think of shipping, when we think of the impact on our producers, our farmers all through Saskatchewan, this is a big issue and one that requires government's attention, one that seems to be a bit of an afterthought far too often for federal and provincial governments present. And when I look at the challenges that are faced I think of, in our province, the

importance of making sure that our producers can get their product to market in an affordable way, in a way that doesn't undermine their bottom line. And I recognize that we have a lot of competition to get product on to those rails, Mr. Speaker, whether it's through our mineral extraction industry or whether it's through energy and resources, and we need to make sure that government is playing its role to stand up for the producers and shippers in our province to ensure they're able to get their product to market and make sure that they're doing so in a way that doesn't . . . that's fair to them. And that, as I say, isn't constant inflationary pressures that are really undermining the hard-earned bottom line of so many operations all through our province.

I read just a little while ago an agreement that was entered into by Canpotex, representing our potash producers, into a 10-year agreement with CN [Canadian National]. I believe this was multi-billions of dollars. I believe it was about \$10 billion, if I recall correctly, Mr. Speaker. Now that's a big commitment that's made. I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, who is acting in the interests of producers to make sure that our producers, our farmers, our shippers are able to get their product to market and able to make sure that their rights are protected through this process. And it seems that we should be providing better attention as to the supports and fairness required to those shippers.

So as I say, the importance of shortlines to Saskatchewan is invaluable. I commend all those individuals that have stepped forward, put some skin in the game, organized structures that have provided services to their local communities whether it's in the Northeast up through Arborfield with Torch River, whether it's down in the Southeast in the Great Sand Hills region, or up throughout the side of the lake there with the Last Mountain shortline, Mr. Speaker, and so many other rail companies that have not only received the investment and good stewardship of the community, but also good governance of the community and have picked up the slack where big rail has failed local communities and has picked up the slack where federal governments and at times provincial governments haven't been there to properly support our producers.

I also bring attention, and I hope it's on the radar of that Agriculture minister and that government, Bill C-52 that's before the House of Commons, a piece of legislation that in title speaks about fairness to producers and shippers, something that we fully support. But the reality of the way that legislation has come to the floor of the Assembly and the contents of it aren't adequate to protect the best interests of producers and are far too slanted in the interests of big rail and provide the shippers no reciprocal processes or powers to ensure that their interests are supported.

I understand that in some cases we've had week-long delays for trains that were supposed to arrive at elevators, and when they then did finally arrive a week later, in many ways unannounced, they also applied penalties when those individuals weren't ready to load.

So we need to do a better job in making sure we're addressing the transportation needs of our producers, our shippers, our farmers all across Saskatchewan. This piece of legislation may be an improvement, and if so certainly it'll be something that

we'll support. Certainly the current divestment process of a rail line or abandonment process of a rail line is less than fair, as I analyzed the words from the minister. And certainly we'll be supporting improvements that strengthen provisions and provide fairness to local communities and ensure the services of rail to communities all across Saskatchewan.

So with that being said, we have a lot of consultation to do with this piece of legislation with our 13 shortline rail lines all through Saskatchewan, with producers all across the province, with municipalities to understand that . . . to make sure we fully understand how these abandonment provisions enhance their ability to be involved in projects and to be able to step forward in an informed way to pick up the slack where big rail has failed communities.

And we'll be doing that sort of analysis, certainly bringing that back to the floor of this Assembly or to committee, and doing all we can to, as I say, continue to push this government and our federal government who has truly failed the interests of producers all across Saskatchewan as it relates to the inflationary pressures of transportation, something that is rather critical when we look to the future of agriculture in our province.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, we have more consultations to do, more questions to bring to the floor of this Assembly, and more information we look forward to receiving from that government and that minister as it relates to the intentions with this piece of legislation.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. At this point in time I'm done offering my comments for Bill No. 61, *An Act to amend The Railway Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure that Bill No. 61, *The Railway 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 Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The 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 Speaker: — This bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Bill No. 89

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 89** — *The Creative Saskatchewan Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and make some comments about Bill No. 89, *An Act respecting Creative Saskatchewan*.

This piece of legislation is a brand new piece of legislation in a form that has just arrived now this spring, and it creates a new agency. And there are so many positive things about the creative industries in Saskatchewan, about the people who are artists and writers and musicians and composers and poets — all of these people — and the work that they can do in the province, that this particular legislation is part of an overall picture.

[14:45]

Unfortunately the surprise decision by the Premier last year to axe the film employment tax credit and effectively chase the film industry out of Saskatchewan clouds what could be a pretty positive statement here. I think that we know that we've asked quite a few times for the Premier to reconsider his decision. One of his colleagues in Canada, in New Brunswick, after nine months did reconsider the decision that they had made about their film employment tax credit and returned the tax credit to the province of New Brunswick so that they could be competitive, their industry could be competitive right across the country. But, Mr. Speaker, that has not happened here. So we have this backdrop of a surprise of fair amount of shock in the film industry which includes probably all of the industries that are referenced in this particular piece of legislation, and subsequently there were some meetings around this particular legislation, but it always had a bit of a bad taste as the meetings proceeded because of the Premier's decision a year ago.

And so when we look at this legislation, unfortunately we have to start off maybe with a little bit of . . . out of a hole in the ground or in a place where we're wary about what's here. Now that's unfortunate because I think if this legislation had been introduced as a complement or as an assistance to the overall arts and creative people in the province, there would be many positive things here.

But let's take a look at this legislation and see what it does. Basically the legislation sets up a corporation. Usually section 3 in an Act sets out what the corporation is going to do, but here they do it in section 3 and 4. So section 3 just says "Creative Saskatchewan is established as a corporation." Presumably that's to make sure that it can operate on its own and do any things that it needs to do.

And then when you go into the next section, that's where you get into the heart of what the purpose of this agency will be. And I think it's important that we take a look at what these purposes are. First purpose, section 4(a) is to basically say the agency is "to facilitate the expansion of a business environment advantageous to the growth of the creative industry . . ." Now I know right off the bat that definition has some troubles because I don't think there is a single creative industry. I think there are many creative activities, many industry. It means work. It means many activities that are taking place. And so that when the term here is to talk about a single creative industry, I think it misses the point. It also is there "to facilitate . . . growth of new employment, investment and production opportunities in Saskatchewan . . ."

In Saskatchewan we've had 65 years of an Arts Board which I think has a big role in providing that type of work. I think we have assurances from the minister and from the Premier that this isn't something that's going to replace the Arts Board and its important role in the community. But we need to be very careful about how this particular legislation is drafted because if that becomes the next surprise in this area, it will not be good for the province or the people of the province and, even more specifically, the artists and composers and musicians and writers who live in our province.

So then we go to the second subsection, 4(b). And it says the purpose of this new corporation is "to encourage and support innovation, invention and excellence in the creative industry by stimulating creative production, format innovation and new models of collaboration among sectors of the creative industry." That's seemingly a good, positive statement. But once again, given the atmosphere around the introduction of this legislation, I know I am wary, and I know many people in the community are wary about what is actually intended with this particular comment.

Then we go on to section 4(c). And this corporation, one of its purposes is "to assist in the promotion and marketing of Saskatchewan's creative industry and its respective products." And I think this particular clause is relatively clear. We as Saskatchewan people are proud of the artists, of the musicians, of all of the people who create as part of who they are. And this agency I think can have a good role in promoting and marketing the work that these people have done and also marketing Saskatchewan and Canada, for that matter.

Next we go on to section 4(d). Another purpose of the agency is "to administer financial assistance, other programs and initiatives that may be assigned to it by an Act or by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not totally certain what this is. Hopefully what it means is that there will be more money available that can be given to the agency to provide assistance to meet some of the items mentioned above, but this clause forces me to ask the question of whether it will be used as a way to pull in or take away funding that's now going through to the Arts Board and to agencies or through various of the lottery funds, and that we need to be watching this particular purpose of the agency very carefully.

We go on to section 4(e) and this says that the purpose of this corporation is "to facilitate the gathering and analysis of information, research and technological development in the creative industry."

That I think can be a positive thing but we have to be careful that this agency isn't being created to take away that role from other of the institutions we have in the province, including some of our post-secondary learning institutions or some of the individuals who do this as part of their own personal consulting kinds of work. But I think that facilitate is a key point to make sure that we have the intellectual capacity, the intellectual property here in the province that allows us to be competitive and also allows us to fulfill the goal of promoting Saskatchewan.

Then we go on, and basically this section 4(f) which is another purpose of this corporation is to increase recognition of the creative industries, I would think would be better, "as a vital element of Saskatchewan's economy and cultural identity." I think we all agree with that. I think we have to recognize that this isn't a single monolithic kind of group of people. It's a multi-varied and very vibrant growing group, a broad group of people.

Then we go on to section 4(g) which it lists as another purpose of this corporation is to enable co-operation between the persons and entities within the creative industries — once again I would say not industry — and between the public and private sectors to encourage development of creative industries. And I think co-operation and working together is always a good goal, and so that is I think a good purpose for this particular legislation.

Then finally listing the purposes here under 4(h). This corporation is "to undertake any other activities or functions assigned by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." And I think that once again if this had been introduced in a slightly different environment, a slightly different time rather than in the time when there was a surprise destruction of the film industry, we would have less concern about a clause like that. So there we have the purposes.

And then when you go into section 5 of this legislation. Then it sets out all of the powers that the agency has. And I think practically those powers are the powers that any corporation created by the Crown would have, and they're expanded and adjusted and changed. We see that this agency will have the power to purchase property or sell property up to a value of 250,000 without obtaining an order in council. That I think reflects some change on behalf of the government in the sense of the limit. But it's within the realistic valuations of property in the present time.

So it's clear that this agency is going to be an agent of the Crown, and that's I think a positive step in setting it up. Head office, we don't know where it will be located, but clearly it'll be somewhere in Saskatchewan. And we'll obviously hear about that as this whole activity continues.

Ultimately the agency is responsible to the minister as set out in section 8. I think it is quite clear that this is a directive Crown agency. It's one that's going to take directions directly from the minister. We don't often see this kind of a clause in legislation that sets up independent boards. But section 8(1) says, "The agency is responsible to the minister for the fulfilment of its purposes and the exercise of its powers pursuant to this Act." That's relatively straightforward.

But then when you go to subsection (2) of section 8, it says:

The minister may give directions that must be followed by the agency, the board or both in exercising their powers and fulfilling their duties and purposes pursuant to this Act and the regulations.

So effectively what we have here is a power given to the minister to direct this agency to do whatever presumably the minister or the Premier wants it to do.

That's, I guess, the right of the government to propose that type of thing. But it once again plays into this sense of fear and sense of wariness about the introduction of this kind of a bill in the light of the decisions by the Premier to effectively wipe out the film industry as he did last year. Now a lot of those kinds of concerns could have been alleviated and maybe still could be alleviated if the Premier followed his colleague the Premier of New Brunswick and changed his mind, admitted he'd made a mistake and would go back and see what we can do to rebuild an industry, the film industry here in Saskatchewan.

So then part III of the legislation, which includes the rules around the boards and the officers and the meetings and the powers of the board and the CEOs — all of those things are relatively straightforward with most of the things that we might have question about to be decided by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in other words, by regulations and by the Premier and by the cabinet. So they've taken some pretty standard clauses.

And when we get into part IV, the financial matters and all of the things that relate to that, once again it's relatively straightforward and there don't appear to be any issues around how that has been done. It's very clear when we get into Part V that there's Crown immunity. In other words, the government or the people who are working in this particular agency can't be sued by anybody if there's any problem with some of the things that they've done. That's a bit interesting for an agency that may be involved in some commercial activities that are relatively high-risk when it's promotion of concerts or other things like that, if that's what kind of activity they get involved in.

[15:00]

So we have legislation that sets up a new agency in this kind of world or in this context of concern around what exactly are the intentions of the Premier and what are the intentions of this government as it relates to the arts because of some of the surprise decisions that have been made. Usually I like to put the best construction on things that are done and say let's work with this to make it be something that's positive. And I think that there are opportunities for that to be done.

But I would suggest that as this legislation is being developed and brought forward it should emphasize the fact that there is not just one single monolithic creative industry. It's a whole number of industries that can work together. I think the language in the Act that talks about co-operation between all of these groups should be encouraged or is part of the purpose of the legislation. I think that's more in line with how the people in these fields of endeavour operate, and I think that should be what is encouraged.

I know that it's legislation that I hope can be welcomed by groups in Saskatchewan in various areas, and we will be watching very carefully as it is being developed. We want to make sure that some of the institutions and some of the methods of supporting the arts in Saskatchewan that have been developed through trial and error over many years, that those are not damaged in any way by what is put forward in this legislation. Now I know quite a number of my colleagues are interested in speaking to this legislation and so, Mr. Speaker, at

this point I will adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 89, *The Creative Saskatchewan Act*, be now read a second time . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Wrong one? Adjournment, okay. The member has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly . . . Excuse me . . . adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adjourn the debate on Bill 89, just to make it clear?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Bill No. 62

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 62 — *The Parks Amendment Act, 2012 (No. 2)*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on the debate on Bill No. 62, the parks amendment Act, 2012. And there's about four areas that minister makes reference to and the Act that they're amending gives certain powers. And I'll start out with the one area, and it's making one of our parks, I guess, bigger; taking some smaller parks and putting them into one bigger one, whether it's Emma and Anglin Lake. And I think that's what the intent of that system was to do. So they're going to be making a park and that's what we think the provisions are.

So if you look at the numbers, it'll be about 16 010 hectares versus it was about 12 000 before. It's taking in a number of parks and putting them into, I guess, a bigger area for protection with the regional parks, and providing to make a new park. Now this is good and I realize that in some of the comments that the minister makes, he talks about making sure that he's consulted with First Nations and the Métis. And I don't know what has happened exactly, who they talked to. It doesn't identify which individuals. Were they from First Nations in the area where they were? Were they Métis groups? Did they talk to the municipalities? Did they talk to the rural people living in that area? Did they talk to the people that will be impacted? I don't know exactly who they talked to, but he makes reference to two years of doing some work. And I don't have any information available to me, or any of their reports that says clearly that work was done, so I have just to take it for that process and we hope was done correctly and right.

But I know that we have an opportunity, when we go from here and we go into committee, to ask individuals out there if they have concerns. And I will make an effort of doing that, checking with some of the First Nations and the Métis organizations. And if they're comfortable with what the government is proposing and with the amendments to making a regional park, I guess, taking it from 12 000 hectares to 16 000 hectares, seeing if they're okay with the provision.

So in there it gives some background information. It talks about some of the groups, organizations they consulted with. And we know our parks and our provincial parks, regional parks,

whether they're federal, provincial, regional, we've got a record number of visitors to them. And maybe that's to do with the cost of leaving our province and the beauty that we have to offer in the province. And we're going to get into talking about visitors that come from out of province and some of the protection. We'll talk about that. That's also one of the parts of the amendment this bill talks about.

But at this point we know that many people go to Emma Lake, Anglin Lake, and those areas where this park is being proposed as a new park. And we'll see what exactly is in there. Will they be having lots for lease, whether they'll be 99 years, will they be . . . how will they be handling that? And who will have access to that? And I'm curious about that, and we're going to ask these questions in committee because we need to ask those. Exactly how many lots will be provided? Will there be lots that clearly are available and how many will be available? So we're going to work out those details in committee and we'll get to ask those questions.

So that area is very clearly . . . How many lots? What's the size? And how much will be lake front? So there's going to be a lot of questions that we'll have, and I know in committee we have that opportunity. But this is the opportunity for us to start some questions and just to make some opening comments and some brief comments. And I know people have a lot of issues they want to discuss, and these ones might be some of the area.

The other area they're looking at doing is moving some of the boundaries in one regional park and making some adjustments to the mapping. And that's clear in here. And I know we'll get some details. We don't know exactly what it is. We have very brief comments from the minister about that. He gives a little bit of description, but again we have to ask those questions for the individuals in that area. And they have an opportunity to contact ourselves as the opposition. And if they have concerns, and we will monitor that and try to see.

And we encourage anyone listening in or people who have concerns to bring them forward. Because we've seen what happens when government and the minister, they do things in secrecy, whether it's selling off regional parks. And we've seen, you know, LeRoy is a prime example of that where we had a regional park being sold off with the public not knowing about it. And you know, a secret deal, and oh, oh, everyone had to be so quiet about this. And they were quietly doing it, and that is not the way to do business with the good people of our province and the good people that are taking care of our regional parks. That is not one way of handling it.

And whether a provincial park, whether it's a regional park, people expect government to do the right thing and to make sure that they consult and they talk with the people that will be impacted. And truly in LeRoy we've seen that did not happen by the public meetings, by the way they tried to cover all that up. And I don't know where that is, and maybe more information needs to come forward and we can find that out.

But that just goes to show you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you have a government who's willing to and a minister who's willing to approve sale of a regional park the way that one was handled. And it was handled very terrible. It truly was not handled in the way it should have been handled. And if there

were concerns raised in a way that, you know, the regional park might have had some concerns. And if it's about funding, it's about infrastructure, there was challenges that, you know, might be coming out of that.

But I think there was jobs. There was opportunities for people that need to have that opportunity to talk about the issues facing them. And that did not happen in LeRoy. So we want to be clear when we're doing anything that we're making changes to and giving government more power and a minister more power, you want to be cautious on what you're doing. And I think we want to make sure is it the right power because we've seen the way this government acts when we give them the power. And we have an opportunity to debate the bills and we have opportunity to bring the concerns. And we do that.

When our citizens of our province who we represent ask us to bring the concerns forward, we have an obligation to do that. And we do that. And I think that clearly, as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, we do that. And we try to bring that stuff and concerns — whether it's a question, whether it's an issue about a regional park, whether it's mapping, boundaries — there's so many different things that affect Saskatchewan people. And they have a right to be consulted. They have a right to feel like they have their say, their input into the process. And unfortunately the government, the Sask Party government has not done that.

And their track record when it comes to consulting and talking with community members — they make a decision, they go ahead and do what they want to do, and then they want Saskatchewan people to just accept this. Trust us; this is good for you. Well Saskatchewan people are truly waking up and they're very concerned. And I think they're going to send a message to the Sask Party who think — and have taken so many people of our province for granted — it's a trust thing. And you get elected in and you're asked to trust. And at the end of the day if you're not going to do that, the people will come back. And I think the Sask Party's going to see that in the next election. They're going to see what they've done and what their track record is and it will be them that will be evaluated by the people that do the voting in our province, that elect the government. So we'll see. I'm not sure by what I'm hearing.

And you know, I've always said this, and you know, some of the challenges the people are seeing. So we'll see exactly where that goes and if you've consulted and if you've not. So when we go into this bill, and I have talked about two areas that we wanted to talk about. One was expanding a new park. One is mapping of boundary.

But they talk about, which is I think interesting, and it's about safety. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is about safety for people visiting our parks. Whether it's a regional park, provincial park, federal park, you want to make sure that people, when it comes to wildlife, when it comes to safety, that education provisions, and they talk about it in here. They want to educate the visitors, making sure that, whether it's videos, whether it's our staff who facilitate the regional parks, provincial parks, explaining to people visiting about, you know, the dos and don'ts when it comes to dealing with wildlife and safety for themselves and their families. We want to make sure people use our parks and are using them in record numbers. And that's good. And that's

very good to see. And we want families, and not only people from the province but from out of province, to come to our beautiful province to enjoy what we have.

But we want to make sure, we want to make sure that our parks are protected, the waters are protected. And we see some of the lack of environmental protection that this government, Sask Party government, has not done. Oh they talk about it in their brochures and they talk about their targets. But they don't touch their targets. They don't meet them. They're just something they want to talk about. It's just like their billboards whenever they want to spread something, and they spend money on that when it isn't.

But I just want to show that area where they say one thing and do another thing. And unfortunately that isn't what people have voted for and haven't asked. And that's no different than it's, you know, three more MLAs with millions to taxpayers. Those are some of the challenges that people in our province see and feel.

But having said that, clearly this provision allows more education to make sure that our visitors are protected whether they're from out of province. And I just want to go back on it because it is important because you know, you look at the wildlife and whether it's, you know, bears, whatever it is, whether it's coyotes, fox, whether it's wolf, whatever it is in an area, whether it's big game, whether it's moose, elk, we have a lot of game that go around our parks. And you can see the parks and they're attracted to that.

And you have a lot of people coming in. And of course bears want to have access to the baskets of food. I mean we know that. And if you leave garbage out, there's certain things that will attract animals to your campsite. And you know, I think making sure that we educate the public . . . And there might be people that are a first time coming to a park to visit our province, and we want to make sure that they're educated and that. So I think this is a good start to educate and you're going to put some money to make sure, or some resources to make sure we're educating people that are visiting our parks to provide them with safety. And I think truly that is a good thing. We'll see exactly where it goes, how far it's going to go, and is it staffing.

[15:15]

But again we go back to looking at that. If you have record number of people coming into our province and visiting our parks, and there's ways that people reserve and I know that there's areas where we've asked some questions of government at the cost of, you know, people reserving campsites and there's a new way of doing it. Government has come with a new way, and we have to make sure who's receiving those dollars. You know, is it insiders, is it good friends? So we want to make sure you're clear on who's getting it. And some of those questions I know we'll be asking in committee because you see the large budget and this is just part of it. We'll ask some of those in estimates, you know, and that's another area where we'll go.

So when you're talking about the parks and safety and we want to make sure clearly that people who visit our parks have the education, but we have to make sure that we have the staff

available and it's important that we have the resources. And if we're going to take in a lot of dollars into government coffers to provide parks . . . And that's good. Don't get me wrong. You know, it's good to see people coming to our beautiful province. We've said that and we support that. But we want to make sure that we have the staff and the resources to provide the service that people expect and come to.

And you know, there are challenges. And sometimes you'll see some of the parks. And I've seen some of the maintenance and, you know, you have a staff who try to do the best job they can and sometimes when you have a small staff and some of the regional parks and some of the provincial parks, there are challenges that people are facing. And people that work in there, they do the excellent job that they can do. They're front-line workers, but they need more resources and sometimes the government, in its decisions, don't see the parks as a priority when it comes to funding them and staffing them and making sure the services are . . . And I mean whether it's government employees who work in our provincial parks or regional parks, however the involvement, government funding, money goes into that.

We want to ensure that people have an opportunity at a job and those that are impacted, but we also want to make sure that staff is available and the government makes sure that those departments are staffed properly, that the services that people come to expect in our beautiful province are there, whether it's the services that they use for the shower houses, whether the washroom facilities, whether it's any of the wood, all the different things that people come to expect when they come to a park. And you know, we've been known as to have some of the most beautiful areas. It's clear people expect certain quality of, I guess, of visiting our parks, and they want to make sure that that continues, and we want to make sure that continues. So we have concerns about that. That's one area that we can go on.

The other area is government has made some movements, and I said that again, with moving some of the boundaries for one of the park area, and that's the fourth amendment that they're talking about in here. And it's moving the boundary. And my understanding, and I think we'll get more of these answers from the minister in committee, but it's from a highway where they're going to go over that. So we're going to look at that. And the member made a few comments about that, but I think in committee we'll have to make sure we find out exactly the details, what's going on, and we get an opportunity to do that. So at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my comments on Bill 62.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The member from Cumberland has . . . The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 56, *The Regional Parks Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — To which committee shall this bill be referred?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — This bill stands referred to the standing committee on intergovernment agency and justice.

Bill No. 90

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 90 — *The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this debate, and it's a relatively new one. The minister in fact just spoke a few days ago in terms of the — in fact just yesterday — in terms of his second reading speech.

And so clearly we just got this package before us and we're studying this as best we can. We do have some preliminary concerns and I do want to make some comments as we go through because I think, as we see, this province is growing and we're actually seeing many of these bills. Actually it was interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because last night I was saying this is like déjà vu all over again because many of the concerns we see in *The Municipal Board Act* that we had before us and a couple of other ones that deal with the issues of municipalities and whether . . . and urban municipalities working together. We were talking about boundaries and annexation, that type of process, and powers of the Municipal Board.

So clearly this is an issue that this government is wrestling with and yet here is one more, one more piece of the puzzle that the minister has brought forward. So as a package, and I think we're going to have to take a look at these as a suite of, or tools in a tool kit that they have for dealing with the issues that are coming from the situation of, that are facing many municipalities around what happens when growth is happening at such a rate that it's forcing pressures on these municipalities to either annex or change the boundaries or develop other areas. And today the minister, or yesterday the minister asked us to consider Bill No. 90, *The Planning and Development Amendment Act*, that really talks at length about the idea of regional planning authorities. And so I'll go through and talk about some of these concerns. And I'll review his speech, and I think that it's a fairly lengthy one and there's many points that he's trying to raise, but there's many concerns that we do have in it.

He talks about the provincial growth plan, speaks of the need for municipalities to work together and overcome the challenges of growth — and clearly that's something that we can all get behind — and how the municipal sector has a key

role in playing that, in the sustainable growth, and that's very important, especially when it comes to providing services and infrastructure for commercial, industrial, residential development, that's for sure. But what happens when things happen in high growth areas? What happens if they go off the rails a bit and where you're expecting people to co-operate a little more and things aren't working out the way that they kind of thought they would? And he talks about that. He says, and I quote, "In most cases, Mr. Speaker, local councils find ways to co-operate with their neighbours and solve the issues and problems they encounter in a collaborative . . . [way]."

And he goes, sometimes it does not occur, ". . . and we see this most often in high-growth areas and in particular around our cities where the challenges of economic growth are felt most acutely." And I guess we can understand that because the pressures are greater. If it's a slow-growth area and things aren't moving very quickly, you have time to work out those issues. So you have the time pressure and the pressure of people knocking on your door and demanding action, and we need to do something about that.

So he talks about the "intent of Bill 90 is to facilitate planning for growth and to overcome [these] difficulties . . ." And it will introduce:

. . . amendments to *The Planning and Development Act, 2007* that will enable the province to respond when required in instances where relations between municipalities have deteriorated to the point that growth and planning . . . is being seriously compromised.

So you have that circumstance. And actually, as I said, that it seems to me that we've dealt with two or three bills that speak specifically to this issue of when that co-operation is not there. He does go on to say that in fact many times it is there, and he says, and I quote:

I don't want to give you the impression that the situation with respect to intermunicipal co-operation is dire. In fact there are great examples of voluntary regional planning all around Saskatchewan: 158 municipalities, both urban and rural, participating in 22 groups . . . [and that they've] received funding through the planning for growth program . . .

So they can work together. And that's exactly what they want to do, but sometimes they don't and that's where we really have a problem. That's where things go off the tracks and something has to happen.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was reading through this and I thought, so in the other speeches that the minister has given, it's been very clear that there has been a high level of consultation. And I'm not sure in this case there has been, with Bill 90. And if I'm wrong, that'll be a question that we'll definitely ask in committee: who did you consult with, and what were the outcomes of that?

Most ministers in most speeches . . . In fact it's a bit of a checklist: where have you consulted, and if you have, be sure to highlight it. Now we always have questions about that because we think it's important to consult. Have you talked to anybody

about the bill? And in this case, the minister does not talk about that so we can assume that he hasn't talked to anybody because this government, if they have talked to anybody, you bet we hear about it. Because they will tell us they've done a full consultation, they've spent a lot of energy and resources. Even if they've talked to one person, they will say it's been a full consultative process, the best that they could possibly do.

So I can assume that they didn't talk to anybody. They didn't talk to anybody about this. Maybe they have. I just find it passing strange that they have not mentioned that. They've not mentioned that they've talked to SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] or they've talked to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. It'd be very curious to know the position of SARM on this and very curious to know the position of SUMA on this. And I'll explain why later because I think that we have some questions for sure.

We understand the difficult spot that when co-operation at the table disappears, what do you do? But I think what you've got to do is make sure you have everybody agreeing, everybody agreeing on a process of how we go forward. If this is one side or one part of the partnership saying this is how we're going to go forward, I've got some deep concerns here. I've got some real deep concerns. And so I find it passing strange that there has been no mention of consultation in the minister's speech, and that will be a question.

So this is what he talks about, the plan of how we go forward in terms of amending *The Planning and Development Act, 2007* and really, effectively how do you have a regional planning authority? He talks about what regional planning authorities have the authority to do. They can establish procedures for the conduct of its business and administration, the appointment of any consultants or employees, technical advisory committees, but they must follow the provisions of *The Planning and Development Act*. And most importantly a regional planning authority is responsible for a regional plan for the municipalities involved.

And I think that would only make sense that if the title of your working group is regional planning authority, you should be expected to come up with a regional plan. What else are you expected to do? I think that well I stated the obvious, that we want to make sure the regional plan is effective. And we'll talk a bit about that when I review the plan or the actual legislation and the explanatory notes.

So he talks about some of the key differences between Bill 90 and the existing legislation. One of the differences he says is that once the regional plan is approved, all municipalities included in the regional plan will be required to confirm its local official community plan and zoning bylaw are in compliance with the regional plan and that they will be responsible for adjusting their official community plans and zoning bylaws to be consistent with the regional plan as necessary.

[15:30]

So this is really important because the minister will have the ability then to effectively determine that there will be a regional planning authority. So this is really critical, Mr. Speaker, and I

want to make sure I quote him directly. He says:

We're looking to municipalities to establish a coordinated approach to development.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the few cases where it may be necessary, we're prepared to act to ensure the success of the plan . . . by providing direction to cities and surrounding . . . municipalities to work together and build capacity for supporting business investment in their region.

So that they then, Mr. Speaker, effectively are saying that they are going to . . . The minister will enforce and determine that there will be a regional planning authority and that all things flow from that. And so I think that's pretty significant, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Essentially he's calling for the abilities to . . . for the regional plan and that the affected municipalities and cities must follow that. And they've had no consultation that we know of to this effect. And it sounds like it's a last measure, but we have some concerns about how this may play out.

So we have concerns. And I just want to review his speech to make sure that we have everything that's important. One of the other concerns or the significant parts that he talks about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the budget. The current budget establishes a regional planning authority program that provides \$250,000 in new funding to support the creation of regional planning authorities. Now they may think that's a lot of money, and that may be in this world of supporting authorities, but I'm not sure it is. You can spend \$250,000 very quickly when you're talking about technical advisers, talking about consultants, that type of thing. It can go pretty darn quick.

What is interesting is that, "Matching funds from the municipalities will be required, and it will be up to the municipalities involved to determine how the costs will be distributed." And so if they're planning to get some of the \$250,000 . . . Well this is interesting. From the way it looks is if the minister decides that they're going to set up the planning authority, regional planning authority X, and they're going to spend 100,000 on it, and it's going to involve five municipalities — A, B, C, D, E — each of them are required to match, the five of them will be required to match the 100,000. So it might cost them \$20,000 each. I'm not sure.

But that's an interesting thing when the minister himself has decided that there will be a regional planning authority, and he's only going to pay for half of it. I think that's . . . I don't know how well that's going to sit. I'm not sure how well that's going to sit when it's enforced. So we have some real concerns about it.

But I do want to take a minute and review some of the parts of the bill. And of course this is *An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act*. And you know one of the things that we're missing so much in the new legislation is often there would be a subtitle or a short title that would give some sort of hint about what the bill is all about. And in this case it doesn't say that at all. It doesn't give any sort of clue about why is this bill necessary. What's it about, you know? To aid in planning in high-growth areas in our province, to help . . . I think it's something that they should have been thinking about.

One of the good things I do want to say about this bill, but I'm not sure because as we go later on we'll see that it doesn't necessarily carry out, but the new section 8. And I'm not sure the differences between this and the old one, so it might be pretty much the same. I'm not sure. But I'll read it because I think it's important: "Consistency with land use policies and statements of provincial interest." I always look for this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it's critical that when we talk about planning and land use policies that we talk about provincial issue interests.

8 Every district plan, official community plan, regional plan, subdivision bylaw or zoning bylaw adopted or amended pursuant to this Act must be consistent with the provincial land use policies and statements of provincial interest mentioned in section 7".

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is key. I think there are, and I don't have them in front of me, I think there's either 10 or 14, 10 to 14 provincial interests. And they range from water use. They range for environmental standards. They talk about Aboriginal concerns. They talk about cultural concerns — all of those things that we think are important criteria when we come to having good, solid, sustainable land use plans and community plans.

So I'm glad to see that they've got this included, but I will say later on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I noticed that it's not brought up again. This is the one place where it's brought up. So whether they feel that's all they need to do — and maybe that's all they need to do — but I am concerned that . . . I would like to see more attention to this particular thing. So it's a concern.

I want to also talk about the "**New Division 4 of Part VI**" and power to establish regional planning authorities. And the subsection is 119.1(1):

If the minister considers it to be appropriate to do so, or at the request of a municipality or municipalities to be included in a proposed regional planning area, the minister may, . . . order, establish a regional planning authority as a body corporate for a regional planning area that is specified in the order.

So there you go. I'm always amazed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how short a phrase can be: "If the minister considers it to be appropriate to do so . . ." There's no other language about why the minister might think something is appropriate to do a certain action. It just says, "If the minister considers it to be appropriate to do so . . ." he may create this regional planning area. I'm saying he because the current minister is a gentleman, and just to keep the gender issue fair. But I do want to flag that. I would think you should have more, more detail on what it means in terms of the language appropriate.

Last night we talked about the issue of the secretary being the gatekeeper — when that person felt that a form was filled out sufficiently, then they would let it go to the next step. In this case, all the minister has to do is consider it appropriate to do so. Then there you go. You are off to the races, and you have a regional planning authority, and you just hope the minister hasn't attached a price tag to it because you may also be paying. The only good news is in that case, they don't have very much

money set aside, so it won't cost you very much money.

But at any rate, this to me seems to be a very thin clause, and I would have liked to have seen more reasons why. And it might have been: if the following circumstances exist then the minister may consider it to be appropriate to do so. But there is absolutely no sort of comeback to this. It's totally up to the minister's discretion. So we have some concern about that.

And then this is what's interesting too:

"Power to direct funding

119.2(1) Subject to any order or directives of Treasury Board, the minister may:

(a) determine the amount of funding for the regional planning authority to be provided by the Government of Saskatchewan in any fiscal year of the Government of Saskatchewan; and

It continues on. And then this (2) is that "The included municipalities in a regional planning area shall provide any funding required by the regional planning authority in addition to the funding mentioned in clause (1)(a) . . ."

So the minister then, as well as not only providing the funding say, shall direct the local municipalities to support that action. And I just worry about that. That seems to be . . . Not only are you being told to participate, but you're told to pay to participate. And I think that again I'm not sure if there was consultation on that and people would say that's a reasonable thing to do. You know, as I've said, I've not read in the minister's remarks there was any consultation about this. And I think that would be a question.

I'd talk about the composition of a regional planning authority. It talks about how the minister may, by order, appoint the following persons. And you know, I found this interesting, that one member from each of the included municipalities, one or more from the Government of Saskatchewan, and any other person the minister is satisfied to have an interest or expertise pertaining to community planning. So I think that's an interesting aspect that that's not set out; that's not solid.

And I also think that, you know, there is a section in here about other duties of a regional planning authority, and:

If an appeal from a decision of a municipality is normally heard by a Development Appeals Board and if that decision has been made by a regional planning authority, an appeal . . . must be made instead to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

Which we had talked about last night, how they are reinvigorating the Municipal Board to do more of this stuff. But some of the other appeal processes aren't going to the Municipal Board, so we want to know more about the Municipal Board. And that will be part . . . As we say, there seems to be a real set of tools, legislative tools that are coming forward here, and this is like the third or fourth or fifth one. I don't have a list in front of me, but there's a lot of municipal bills before us this year.

So we have some real, real concerns about this. I want to say, as I said earlier, I was happy to see that there was some reference to the provincial statement of interest because it talks about some of the very key things that we do in this province and how we think our communities should be planned and how our land should be used.

But when we talk about the regional plan and section 8, “A regional plan may contain statements of policy with respect to . . .” a whole set of other items. And it talks about the coordination of approaches for stewardship of environmentally sensitive land. It may talk about that. It may talk about matters dealing with significant transportation and municipal infrastructure within the regional planning area. But it doesn’t talk about provincial interests. And I just want to make sure that there should be really a checklist, a checklist that if the provincial statement of interests apply, then they should be addressed in here. So I’m worried about that, and we will have questions about that as well. Yes.

And this is where a dispute resolution, when it talks about that, and it doesn’t mention in that section the Municipal Board, which I think might be a place. And it would be interesting to hear why isn’t the SMB [Saskatchewan Municipal Board] involved in the dispute resolution aspect of it because it seemed that we’re expanding some of the duties of it in other bills, that maybe that would be an appropriate area to go.

So I want to also take a look at explanatory notes because there were parts in there that I found very interesting that when I flip back to this, that really I guess, you know, not only are they . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find this an interesting bill. We just have to have . . . When we get into committee, this is going to be a very interesting one because I’ve just got to know if any of the SUMA or SARM folks, how they feel about this process.

[15:45]

And I do understand that in many ways it’s a last step because you’re talking about groups that aren’t co-operating together. It’s not for the everyday situation, but it is interesting how they’ve set that out. So not only does the minister get to decide whether there’s going to be a regional planning authority, and the only criteria is he figures if that person the minister figures is appropriate, that’s all the criteria it’s appropriate to do. And then he also gets to decide how much money is going to be spent by the authority. Then he also gets to decide how many people are going to be on the board. And then it also gives the minister, once they’ve set up the board . . . And the board, sounds like if it’s dysfunctional, the minister has the authority to adopt the regional plan on behalf of an included municipality if that municipality fails to adopt that regional plan.

So this is laying out quite a line of actions for the minister. And I’m not sure if this is similar to other times in our history where the minister of Municipal Affairs has had to be so draconian, may be the word, so extreme in the behaviour of saying, this is how you will behave. I am interested to see how this plays out in reality. And you know, we have only so many cities, and we have only so many RMs, so I mean I think that this is going to be an interesting process to see how this will play out.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said we just got the second

reading speeches yesterday. We will talk a lot about this. We’ll take a lot of time to examine this. And we’ll talk to a few people and say, so what do you think? Is this the best way to go forward? Clearly the government has put forward several bills along this line, and so we do have some concerns that we’ve identified. We do understand the challenges of growth in Saskatchewan, but we’ve got to do it in a way that people feel that they’ve been heard, they’ve been valued, you know. And it’s not growth at any cost, not growth at any cost, but that we can have smart growth.

And I think my colleague from Athabasca spoke about smart growth. And I know he talks about that an awful lot when we talk about these kind of bills. But it’s not about drastic growth or growth at any cost. I don’t think anybody wants to see that. And so when we see this kind of legislation before us, I think we have a lot of questions about what does this really, what does this really mean? And clearly, you know, when we have disputes or circumstances where people are not co-operating, I think you need to look at deeper reasons. Why is that? And if you just put a Band Aid over it, it will bubble up and it will percolate up somewhere else. And so we do have some concerns about this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So with that I know — I am very confident actually — that many of my colleagues will want to speak to this bill at length. So at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that we adjourn second reading on Bill No. 90, *An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 2007*. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The member has moved a motion of adjournment on debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 63

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 63 — *The Regional Parks Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To join in on the debate on Bill No. 63, I want to open up, I guess, some opening comments before I get into the details of this, of the bill and what I guess what the minister is proposing here. And we’ve seen the way, the handling of the previous regional park. And this one, it talks about looking at amending and the regional park. And that’s some areas of I think for some out there . . . And I’m going to think about LeRoy. And I’m going to talk about LeRoy regional park because this legislation could impact LeRoy clearly.

And I think the handling and the way the minister handled that file and the issues that were raised not only from staff of LeRoy regional park, probably concerns of residents, and questions about the process and the way that whole LeRoy regional park was handled, and what groups were involved in the discussions,

what partners, with the regional park, with the municipalities? Was the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association — I know there's an organization represents them — what involvement and what did they know about this? And clearly, you know, did those organizations, did the municipalities, did the staff, did the communities that utilize that regional park in LeRoy, were any of them consulted or talked to in any way? And who was let in on this deal?

And that was the start from day one, came off clearly, the way the handling and the minister handled that whole file, I think clearly with the concerns that was raised has . . . Well it makes us want to really stop and have a look at what he's proposing or what it will be proposed by these changes. And just seeing the way the LeRoy regional park was handled by his department and as him being the minister and just the secret deal that was made there or potentially muzzled anyone from talking about it, I think that's the wrong approach. And clearly from people that responded to us and that I talked to, and I know they had meetings. They had an opportunity to when they finally, they had . . . The communities came together in a public meeting to discuss the issues and the handling of, the government's handling. And you know, the minister has to take the responsibility for this LeRoy regional park and that deal he was approving. He gave his blessing, his approval to that secret deal that nobody else . . . And when you have a deal like that, you wonder, who was all involved?

And you know, it was a company I believe out of BC [British Columbia] at the time was told they could buy the LeRoy regional park. Now there might have been reasons why LeRoy regional park was being offered to that company. We don't know whether it's growth, whether there . . . what was going on. But I do know from the people that I talked to and the concerns that were in the meeting and what I got in local media, whether letters, phone calls, people responding, the way it was handled and the secrecy that it was handled was not right, was not fair to the people that are the shareholders and, you know, stakeholders in that community and who utilized that regional park and who volunteered on, whether it's the boards, whether . . . and those that travelled from all over the region to use that park.

And you look at a park like that, and I think LeRoy has a pool. And as they move on, and you have a regional park who develops a park so that community members can utilize the park. And some of the parks, the regional parks, you'll see, they do an amazing job. I mean if you look at the way the maintenance is done, the infrastructure, and there are challenges. And I know LeRoy had its challenges and they talked about that. It was cost and stuff, but we never ever did get all the details. How much the regional park . . . And I think we'll do that, and we'll get a chance in committee to ask some of those questions and try to get from the minister exactly what went on and why he approved such a deal.

And having said that, I know there's been a lot of concern raised from LeRoy and that whole . . . I think, you know, it's the first time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there was ever a regional park that a minister approved the sale of, and the current Minister of Parks approved that. And that's not only alarming to I think the provincial association — it should be — but to the regional parks. And where are they willing to go?

And that's the concern, just how far. And you see a government whose I guess secret agenda and certain connections with certain people, insiders get special treatment. Some offers being only certain individuals find out about the sale. Whether that's by word of mouth, I'm not sure how they're getting that out to . . . [inaudible] . . . the insiders. And their friends and buddies and whatever, supporters, they get offered certain deals — sweetheart deals, we call them — and others don't.

And when you look at LeRoy regional park and clearly that whole . . . watching that, the whole events as they uncovered themselves where people weren't aware of it, nobody had a clue. So many people had no idea that that deal was being done in secrecy and all this. Interesting that it wasn't government asking for it. It wasn't LeRoy regional park asking for the secrecy is what we're being told. It was the company buying this who wanted it done in secrecy. And that just doesn't cut it, and that doesn't make any sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It truly doesn't. Like why would you not share this with people that are impacted? And it goes to show a trust. And I talk about that.

People elect a government that they want to trust and a government that looks after their assets, looks after the public dollars, looks after our Crowns — and there's many provisions — look after our regional parks, our provincial parks. They look at the assets that our province has. And I know when you look at regional parks . . . And I know government puts in money, and whether that's for infrastructure or operations, there are some deals that go on. And you know, I don't know every single deal that government does and track every dollar, not like the government does or the minister has at his disposal with the staffing. And he does have that. I mean we would have to do that through questions, you know, and that type of thing, whether it's written questions or from the House here.

But having said that, that LeRoy deal has made so many people pay attention to what's going on and the file. And now, you know, I'm not sure exactly whatever happened with that whole deal. The government was ready to allow that to happen. The minister approved it, and we need to look into that. And there's more questions that need to come out of that. Where is that deal now? Did that deal go through? Did it fall through? Has the regional park taken over? And that's what we're hearing. And I think that needs to be clarified. What happened? What happened to that sweetheart deal, the secrecy deal that the minister said they couldn't share with the public, they couldn't share with individuals?

And that's where you see a minister who has certain powers, how he handled it. And that's really concerning to a lot of people about the way the minister handled this file. And it goes to talking about giving him certain powers or removing powers from him and giving them to a regional college. That's the scary part of it. It's concerning when you see, whether we're giving powers to . . . and more powers to a minister, or you're giving it to the region, we have to make sure what powers are we turning over and are we clear on it, and who's requested this? Who's asked for this?

And I think . . . You want to talk about a region giving them powers, and I mean the minister talks about that, and we'll have to go through this in committee and find out exactly, detail upon detail. Well I mean we'll get to do that. I understand that.

We get a chance here to make some opening comments about this, and I will go through this bill as we're talking, just certain items. But I think it was important to share, when you see government saying, and a minister and his department, giving away certain powers or the minister taking certain powers or the ministry having certain powers over organizations, over people, over the authority to allow assets to be sold off of a regional park that belonged to everyone. Those are our assets as a province.

And that's the first time from my understanding, and I've asked this that anyone was aware that a regional park was approved, and the minister was so quick to approve it in secrecy. And that was the concern. So it's the way and the handling of this whole LeRoy deal. So it comes back to this. Now you have provisions in here where you're asking the minister, or he's asking to move certain powers. And I don't care if those powers are going to him, to his ministry, or to the regional park. There are certain provisions.

What and who have they contacted? And he talks about, he's worked with the associations. And you know my colleagues previous have talked about government always saying whether they talked to one person or they went through that process of consulting. And then later on you find out, whoa, just because you consulted with one person or you sent a letter out or you called a meeting and, you know, depending on who you made sure was available or who had access to that information about the meetings . . .

And that goes to show you again about the secrecy and the handlings, the way government handles the issues. And that's the concerns that we see and I think people are expressing. They're very concerned about the handling and the way government has been handling things. And there are other secret deals and some of the challenges that people see. And you know, that whole deal at LeRoy, and I mean there was an outcry from the community, and even though the community, the community brought forward their concerns and the public meetings that they had and the frustration . . . And of course the company came that was proposing to buy this in the secret deal, and officials were there. They wanted to do this very quietly.

The concern that people had at that public meeting, and they expressed that from the floor and the concerns and I mean with the media. People were blindsided. People had no clue that their regional park was being sold off, this little deal, and why. And they were asking why, and they wanted clarification.

[16:00]

And it was all made to sound like, oh, no, this is going to be a good deal. It's great. This company's going to do it. And that's the understanding they were told. There were certain things would be taken care of. And to this day I don't believe . . . that that deal now has fallen through. We don't know what's going on with it. I mean I've heard a report and I think there's even been some talk about that that deal didn't go through. And I mean that's another area where we need to find out and get the details. And I believe, if I'm correct, that that deal fell through. Now we don't know why. And maybe it's good. Maybe it's good that the regional park is going to be retained by the organization.

Now is it a lack of dollars? Is it that the regional parks and the municipalities that partner to provide this service, recreation to families who are in the area, and are there challenges? Yes. And is it about dollars? And sometimes that is about the dollars.

But I think at the end of the day people want to make sure that the government shares the plan that will impact them. And the government has an obligation, and I talk about the trusting and, you know, the Sask Party has been elected in a number of seats in our province. And that's good. Good for them. The people gave you the trust. And we're going to work hard on our side. We're going to work very hard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to gain.

And some of the actions of the Sask Party clearly has shown people in our province, people in our province that yes, you put the trust. Don't take that for granted. And I've said that many times in this House and I explain this when we're debating bills, about the trust. But they can sit there and they can make their . . . There's talk about being humble. They should be a little bit humble and not always attacking the way they want to attack. But that's all right. They figure that they have the so-called power and they have . . .

But they're taking many rural people for granted. They're taking urban people for granted. They're taking First Nations and Métis people for granted and they're taking many citizens and our youth for granted, and they will pay a price. And our teachers for granted and our students for granted. And we've expressed that time and time again.

So when you have legislation and bills that are bringing forward by a government, any time they give themselves more power or they take power away or they give power, you have to wonder why. Now if it's just changes that we're talking about, simple, whether it's a name change, there's certain things that go on. And we call it housekeeping items that you might clear up. And that's fine. That's fine to do that kind of work.

And you look, we look at some of the legislation that this government has changed and willing . . . And I mean, my colleagues talk about the labour, Bill 85. That's a concern to so many, that this government's bullheadedness is just going to bulldoze away with what it wants to do. And it doesn't have the respect that they have from the people out there because they're not being consulted. When you take people for granted and you just, you know, bulldoze what you want and your ideas and you tell people, well this is what it is, and then you say, well we'll consult you after. That's too late. And so many times under this government and the years that they've been there . . . The Sask Party has been there for too many years to be honest, and people are talking about it.

There's supporters out there that supported them, that have said to me, I supported them in the past election but I will not for several reasons. And they talk about that. And I remind the Sask Party, I remind that just . . . Yes, be as arrogant as you want from over there. Make your comments. That's fine. You know, one stone in your backpack every day, every day you start — different organizations, individuals — and you start not consulting, and you take things for granted, and you take the people of our province for granted. You will pay a price. You will pay a price. Numbers always go up and down. Your numbers were where they're at, and we'll see where they go.

But going back to this, I want to use that as an example because it's not listening, and that's what we're saying. This government does not listen. And here's why they don't listen. They don't listen. And that's okay. They can sit there and have all the fun they want with it, take it for granted. Let them take the people of our good province for granted. You will pay a price for that one day. You will pay a price.

Now having said that, you know, we look at individual bills and this one. There's about four areas that they're looking at changing, and I just want to kind of maybe go through some of that. Now the powers I've talked about in this bill, clearly we're giving more power to a regional park than taking away from them. They want clarification. The minister and his ministry, the regional parks want to be very clear.

Well in this legislation and in their . . . Are they going to make it sure that before a regional park will ever be sold off, are they going to put provisions in here? And are they willing to make accommodations to legislation? So maybe they need to say, hold it. We're not going to pass this legislation. We're going to make sure we consult with everyone. We're going to make sure we talk with individuals. We're going to make sure we talk with the shareholders and stakeholders and people that are impacted, whether they're the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association, whether it's individuals, whether it's the municipalities, whether it's people that utilize the facility of a regional park. Are they going to propose and are they going to work with those individuals? Are they going to consult them?

And we've seen the action of this government, and it doesn't want to do that. It decides to do what it wants to do and it says, this is what we're going to do. And it doesn't seem to matter. It just doesn't seem to matter what they want, what individuals want, what organizations want. And that, I think, this government has made very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very clearly the way they've handled the film tax credit, the way that they handled concerns. When they know it's wrong and when they're doing wrong, they spend more taxpayers' dollars, more taxpayers' dollars on billboards, on ads to PR spin what they want.

So here you go. You have a regional park. Will they be spending money to advertise what they're proposing when they go out and sell the option of looking at other regional parks? That is a concern. Where are they going to go? This government will go anywhere it wants to get rid of assets of the people, without consulting. And that's the concern that people have. It's clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is an area of concern.

Now they talk about adjusting some of the legislation and correcting it. And some of that is for community and non-profit organizations in establishing and operating of regional park. They're proposing some changes in here. And we have to make sure clearly through the legislations . . . And whether it's legislation, regulations, these powers are handed off to the ministry or the minister or a regional park, but clearly regulations come into play too.

And who develops those regulations when you have certain powers being handed over to a minister or the ministry? Then the regulations come in. And who do they consult? Who do

they talk to with those regulations? Do they do what is right by consulting? And we see that. And I mean if you look at their track record when it comes to changes of regulations and legislation, this government does not like to have to consult. Oh, it brags about it that it does it. It talks about it. It likes to talk. They talk about it, but where is the facts? Their facts are not there because they don't have those facts. It's their idea is what they want, and they push ahead and they bully people on what they want. And that's a fact. They bully people. And if you say anything that they don't like or the way they're going, then they bully.

And you know what? It's interesting. Why should people feel that they can't come to this legislation, to a minister or a ministry of this government when the people of this good province clearly have issues and concerns? Why should they not? Why shouldn't they bring it forward? But we have a lot of people who don't want to come forward, who are nervous, whether they're an organization, because . . . Why is that? Because of their . . . They feel concerned that if they raise issues, whether it's with the media, opposition, whether government that come back to them will be . . . I guess issues and concerns that will come back to them because they've raised that concern. The government wants to bully them and push them . . .

An Hon. Member: — Your speech doesn't actually make sense.

Mr. Vermette: — You know what? That just goes to show you. That just goes to show you how they are bullies. Exactly those comments right there the members opposite are obviously bringing forward. And they can say what they want and that's fine, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because clearly the people have their voice and they want to have their voice heard.

And this government sits there again in secrecy and wants to have little meetings. And they do everything they want in secrecy for their insider groups. And then they want to criticize people for the way they handle things, their track record, their record. They should be ashamed of what they've done and how they've handled the duty to consult and the track record. And you look at that about consulting individuals when you pass legislation.

And if you want to talk about certain bills, Bill 85 is another one. Very concerning to a lot of . . . If you look at just that way, they're pushing ahead with that. People have asked them to take time, take time. And any of their bills, if they're a bill that makes sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to bring forward, we have supported that and we work with the government. When it makes common sense to work with the government, this opposition has done that. And we've moved legislation that has helped Saskatchewan people, and that's clear.

But when you have legislation that they want to push their way, and it's their agenda and it's the way they want to do it and it doesn't . . . They don't care about consulting anyone. They're going to do what they want. Hey, we're at the head of this and we're going to do what we want. The people are going to . . . Take that for granted. And I say that to those members. Keep taking the people of this good province for granted, and see where it gets you. Just keep it up; keep that attitude that you

have. And you're so humble? We don't see you as being very humble.

But having said that, make your comments all you want. At the end of the day, the people of this province want to make sure that this government passes legislation, and they share with the people, and they talk to the individuals that'll be impacted. Whether it's our working men and women of this province, whether it's middle-class families, people just want to feel like they're getting their voice heard. And the government currently does not hear a lot of what the people are saying. We see that just by their actions, the way they carry on the business and the way they operate, and the way they conduct themselves.

We're supposed to be in here trying to do the good work of the people of this province and try to do that good work. And you know what? We have. We have challenges out in our province, and we understand that. And where we come in agreement on some of these changes, when they make sense, we'll support that. When they don't, when they don't make sense, then you can't support that and you have to make sure it's clear what's happening.

Now having said this, this bill, this bill will have to have to be clearly worked out and asked some tough questions. Now having said that, this bill has some areas where clarification needs to be done. And what are the regulations? What are the rules? What will come after this? And we talk about the regulations.

At this time, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to bring forward some questions for the minister and his officials in committee when we go to committee. And we'll get there; there's time for that. But this is a nice opportunity to have some opening remarks and talk about some of the challenges and why that this government is bringing legislation like this forward. Is it because they made such a mess of the LeRoy project and the way they handled that one so now they're going to bring some provisions? Because that's clearly, it's about LeRoy and the way they did the secret little sale and they wanted everything quiet. That's what it's all about. It's about the little quietness. It's about certain people getting certain things. If you're in the inside, the in-crowd, it's a supporter. We've seen some of that stuff clearly by this government the way they handled it, the files.

Now we'll go back into this part of the legislation and proposed changes that they're making. And sometimes, you know, these are items that'll be cleared up and sometimes they're not. But right now at this time, I conclude on my remarks on Bill 63.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 63, *The Regional Parks Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — To which committee shall this bill be referred? I recognize the Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

[16:15]

Bill No. 64

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 64** — *The Regional Parks Consequential Amendments Act, 2012/Loi de 2012 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Regional Parks Act, 2012* be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to make some remarks, I guess, with *The Regional Parks Consequential Amendments Act, 64*. Clearly, clearly, you know, these are changes that will need to be brought into effect because of the changes that we're doing with Bill 63. Consequential amendments are required to change some of the wording in legislation or regulations, and that provision will be provided when this comes into, I guess, effect and comes into law for us. So at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't have any further comments on this bill at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 64, *The Regional Parks Consequential Amendments Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — To which committee shall this bill be referred? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — This bill stands referred to the Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 70

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Marchuk that **Bill No. 70** — *The*

Education Amendment Act, 2012 (No. 2)/Loi n° 2 de 2012 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to enter into the debate on Bill No. 70, *The Education Amendment Act, 2012 (No. 2)*. I'd just like to go through some of the minister's second reading comments here and talk a little bit about what this bill proposes to do and just some thoughts about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So this bill sets out to do about six different things, beginning with amending the compulsory school age that's currently seven years of age to six years of age. The minister has pointed out that this school age has been in place since 1940 and isn't consistent with other jurisdictions. Most other jurisdictions have moved to the age of six. And the reality is most children in grade 1 in Saskatchewan are six years of age, so the minister has flagged and said that this won't have a significant increase in enrolments when the compulsory age is changed.

The minister points out that research shows that children who have access to education at earlier ages have improved academic and social outcomes. I would agree with that. I know the literature that I've read about that is true. Any educator that I've ever talked to, people who specialize in early learning and care talk about the importance of child care, preschool and onward, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's interesting that the minister recognizes this and has failed to move on full-day kindergarten, as a matter of fact. Full-day kindergarten was offered, some of the school boards were offering full-day kindergarten and, as of last year because of the funding formula and budget constraints, have been forced to cut it.

And I know in constituencies like mine, and as a matter of fact everywhere, the reality is vulnerable kids can be found across, I know, all of Saskatoon, all of Regina. The reality is there are vulnerable kids everywhere. But full-day kindergarten has an extra big benefit for kids who might not have some opportunities in their home, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it was a huge blow to many families and unfortunate for many children to not have access to full-day kindergarten. So I know the minister is recognizing here the importance of how the . . . Literature shows that access to education at an earlier age has positive impact, yet this government can't see fit to ensure that school boards can fund and offer full-day kindergarten.

Again, a second thing that this bill proposes to do is to change the definition of school to reflect that pre-kindergarten programs are also provided at school sites. "The change will also reflect the different approaches [the minister says] for delivering the province's education programs through virtual schools as well as custody and care facility schools."

Pre-K [pre-kindergarten], I've commended the government in my budget speech, but I think introducing more pre-K programs is really a very positive thing. I know in the previous administration the work had started and the government has

carried on and has expanded the numbers greatly. And I think that that's a good piece of work.

But again I have to . . . There's two pieces on . . . Before and after pre-K, we've got early learning and care, which starts before pre-K. That's child care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this government, we had record numbers of live births here in Saskatchewan over recent years, and the government for the last two years in a row has added 500 spaces and 500 spaces. That's a drop in the bucket. And adding spaces is not an early learning and care plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The reality is huge problems with our subsidy system. We've seen that our subsidy system, we've paid out a 25-cent subsidy. And I've asked the question, was that a direct deposit 25 cents or did the family who got paid get a cheque? A 25-cent subsidy is not acceptable. So it's great that the government has committed to pre-K programs and is acknowledging that in some of the changes in this bill, but there's other pieces that go to supporting families, and one of them is around child care.

The second piece I have mentioned earlier, which was the need to support full-day kindergarten. I have children in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of them who've lived in refugee camps, who've never held a pencil. And full-day kindergarten does a great deal of work in preparing kids for the increased learning challenges that happen in grade 1. So there are some . . . Again, supporting pre-K is great and these amendments are positive, or the amendments support what already is happening, but I'm glad that we're looking at school beyond the kindergarten to grade 12 model and recognizing that school, early learning and care starts before children even hit the official age of school.

The change of the school day definition, this is a third change. The change to the school day definition is intended to reflect the regulatory amendments that were enacted on January 1st, 2013 of this past year. And:

The new definition recognizes that a school day could be comprised of instructional time and non-instructional time. The proposed revision to the definition of school day has been identified as necessary during . . . [the government's] work to finalize new regulations for the school year.

So this, I believe, is related to changing the school year from starting after Labour Day which has, I know . . . Actually I was the Tourism critic when Tourism Saskatchewan brought forward their study saying that starting the school day before Labour Day had a huge impact on tourism business. And they couldn't retain staff and they were losing business. And which is as a parent, I actually really appreciate starting after Labour Day. But when I was the Tourism critic, I actually thought, well that would be an interesting private members' bill. And I went and I talked to some of the, two of the school boards in Saskatoon and asked them what they thought.

And you know what they told me, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They told me that their families had mixed opinions on the post-September 1st or Labour Day long weekend start because there are families who really appreciate the February break. There's the families who really appreciate a full two weeks at

Christmas. Families have changed over the years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we all have different needs. So I decided at that time that that wasn't something I wanted to do or the feedback that I was getting was that people had mixed opinions.

So whether or not I like the idea of school starting after the September long weekend, the reality is I know many teachers and many school boards were very concerned about the lack of consultation on that particular piece. And I think that that seems to be a bit of a hallmark of this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lack of consultation. It may end up, a change may end up being positive, but people need to feel part of the process, especially people who know and understand a system well and are involved in that system.

It's absolutely imperative when we make public policy that we engage people who know about a specific topic — the good and the bad. We need to know that we have the full depth and breadth of discussion about an issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we go ahead. So I know that teachers and school boards did not appreciate the government making that move without — the move to the post-Labour Day start — without discussing it at all with stakeholders who know that sector very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A fourth change in this bill:

The proposed amendment would grant the Ministry of Education the authority to develop policies and regulations for pre-kindergarten programs [the minister says] which will continue to contribute to more consistency and accountability among the province's pre-kindergarten programs.

So again I've talked about pre-K, and I think it's great that the government has added more pre-K. But you've got the piece before pre-K, which is early learning and care, and you've got full day kindergarten which I think the government has let people, families down here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A fifth piece that the minister is proposing, that the fines associated with various offences be increased. When we talk about offences, we find that we're talking about provisions of the Act related to school attendance, school safety, administration, just to name a few of those. So the minister's proposing that those fines related to those various offences be increased. Right now they're currently at \$500 or less for an offence, and the minister's proposing to increase to a minimum amount of \$5,000 for a first offence and \$10,000 for subsequent offences. The minister went on to say that increasing the fine to these levels sends a clear message that non-compliance is taken seriously, which gives school divisions the backing they need to impose fines if necessary.

The minister has said that in this case that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association have indicated their support for these amounts to be increased. So clearly the government in this case has said that they've consulted. But we've also seen this government say that they've consulted with specific organizations and have learned later that they did not in fact consult with those. But in this case they are saying that they talked to the STF [Saskatchewan

Teachers' Federation] and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, and it's here in black and white, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So they say that they've consulted and these organizations are in support of that, and we have not heard otherwise from those respective bodies, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The final piece that this bill proposes to do is:

. . . to make it easier for newcomers to enrol in schools by clarifying who is considered a provincial resident. The present wording in the Act [the minister says] does not sufficiently describe who is a resident for the purposes of participating in . . . [the Saskatchewan] education system without cost. The regulations prescribe that tuition fees be charged to those who do not meet the criteria. [And apparently] Most provinces and school divisions accept children of temporary residents, refugee children, and reciprocal exchange students,

But right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Act does not clarify these considerations. So the minister's proposing these to support those who come to Saskatchewan from other countries on temporary work permits with children. Right now we provide publicly funded education to those who come to our province with young families from other countries on these temporary permits for post-secondary education. So this change would clarify that this is, the right is equally applicable to those who are here on temporary work permits. So children are entitled to be educated in the province without charge, and now this Act explicitly lays that out, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I just want to say I know again in my own constituency I have schools, two schools in particular, where we have more than 20 countries represented, more than 40 languages spoken. It's really quite an amazing dynamic in some of these schools. And we are a province made up of immigrants and newcomers. And it's great to see new people coming to Saskatchewan, but we need to make sure that the supports are in place for them.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the change to the immigrant nominee family class last spring, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that . . . if we're talking about newcomers to Saskatchewan. I think many newcomers felt betrayed and let down by this government, people who had businesses, who had been in Canada, who were already permanent residents, who'd come to provinces like Ontario and BC, set up businesses and were working and came in good faith to Saskatchewan because of the immigrant nominee program and the family class.

I think one of the things when we think about settling here in a new country, we have to think about . . . I can't even imagine, actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming to a new country and facing total culture shock, different food, climate. I mean the climate has even been hard on those, this year, of us who have lived in Saskatchewan all our lives. So imagine coming from a tropical climate and coming to Saskatchewan. One of the things that helps people — there is evidence around this — that helps people settle and support is ensuring that they have family around them. And this change to the immigrant nominee program, to the family class was hugely . . . Many people felt betrayed.

As a matter of fact, I've chatted with one of the civil servants

who was here last week. He's been in Saskatchewan for three years and is incredibly frustrated. He was hoping to bring his brother here and is no longer in a position to do that. And he feels like throwing his arms up and is quite frustrated. So on one hand, the government is making some good changes here to support newcomers to Saskatchewan, but we've seen in less than a year they've also made some very negative changes that hurt and harm people who've decided or want to make Saskatchewan home and contribute to this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I know that there are more remarks to come on Bill 70, *The Education Amendment Act*. Just one moment, please. I believe that some of my other colleagues will have many things to say about Bill 70, and thanks for the opportunity, and I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — The member has moved a motion of adjourned debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[16:30]

Bill No. 73

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 73 — *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it's my great pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill, Bill No. 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act*.

This bill is part of a suite of legislation introduced by the minister in relation to all three of the municipal bills or Acts that currently exist: *The Municipalities Act*, *The Cities Act*, and then *The Northern Municipalities Act*. So I believe the intent of reviewing all three of these bills at this time is to provide some modernization and streamlining of certain processes, and simply again the good work of the people over in the ministry and at the Department of Justice who are constantly reviewing legislation to ensure that it is modern and appropriate.

And I always like to take a moment to commend the work of those folks and the public service in general for the good work that they do for our government and for our people and for the province in general. And just on that note, I also want to take a moment at this point to acknowledge the work of the staff in the building here and the hard work they do. I know everyone's working really hard, and I just want to give a particular shout-out today to the good work of our excellent staff. And I'm sure that goes for government staff and for the Legislative Assembly staff because, without the work of the people behind us, we know that very little would happen in this building, and certainly the legislative agenda would not proceed and the voice

of the people wouldn't be heard. So this is just a shout-out to the staff that are working really hard for all of us and doing good work.

In this bill there's a few things that the minister indicated in his initial comments when the bill was introduced back in November. And he talked about improving processes and a number of different amendments. And there's quite a few amendments in the bill, so I won't take the time today to go through them line by line because a large number of them are clarifying or providing consistency or ensuring small details that were not properly worded in the previous or the existing bill are going to be cleaned up. So this is the kind of work that is ongoing in any government, and certainly the work here appears to be meeting that need.

There are a few significant changes, though, that I want to take a few minutes to comment on. And the first one is to improve processes relating to boundary alterations or annexations through the municipalities involved. And right now it appears that the processes are established to do that, but there's some changes needed to make it easier for municipalities to make those applications and more scope for the Municipal Board to rule on the applications when people are applying for annexation. So those are the kinds of things that we see in this bill.

I'm just going to pull out the bill itself, just go through a few of the changes that are added. One of the big definitions that's being added now, and this is something new, is the additional service area. It's a new definition. And this is something that will be "a geographical area within a rural municipality that includes a residential or other land use requiring services or levels of services that are different from the services or level of services provided in areas of the rural municipality that are not additional service areas."

So I think one of the things this reflects is the changing nature of rural municipalities here in Saskatchewan. Certainly one only needs to look at municipalities like Corman Park or Sherwood where we see this isn't your typical bucolic rural municipality that would have existed in days past. These are thriving places where all sorts of industry are occurring, all sorts of . . . I see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're anxious for your substitute to arrive, but I don't know . . . I'll carry on. It's where new industries are springing up all the time and mainly in the municipalities that are close or near to urban areas. And you know, I've been reflecting on this since I became elected and looking at the face of rural Saskatchewan since when I was a young girl and growing up in rural Saskatchewan. And things have definitely changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's an exciting time in rural areas.

So the rural municipalities obviously are being caught up in the new complexities that the 2010s bring, and this new century. And so they have to have the tools they need to be able to respond accordingly. And I know in near urban areas, we . . . The legislative tool to date has been *The Planning and Development Act* and certainly that has been one that has worked successfully for the, you know, potential conflicts that can arise when urban municipalities are pushing out into the surrounding rural areas. And that's one of the tools that's been made. And I noticed there's also another bill being introduced

this session to deal with *The Planning and Development Act*. We know things like the Global Transportation Hub put extreme pressures not only on the urban municipality and the government that has its own needs to deal with, but also with the rural municipalities where it's located, in this case Sherwood.

So it's important that the legislative suite that's available to these municipal governments is responsive and gives them the kind of tools they need to be able to respond to the growing complexities of rural life. There are many small industries now located in rural Saskatchewan. You look at, you know, the canola crushing plants and then every time I drive anywhere in Saskatchewan I see all kinds of small enterprises taking place that you wouldn't have seen 50 years ago for sure.

And so the demands and the types of services that those industries need, or those complex business farms . . . You know, even the size of the farm machinery has completely changed, and certainly the buildings that are needed and the types of power and energy resources that are needed to keep these large-scale industrial-type operations operating at peak performance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we have increasing sophistication at the municipal governance level, and as a result *The Municipalities Act* itself needs to be amended and updated to reflect those kinds of changes. Now the rural municipalities Act is a very large Act, one of the largest ones in the legislative suite for the province. And it actually has almost 500 sections. The current Act is over 230 pages long. It's a complex Act and this bill attempts to fix a number of portions throughout the Act.

One of the new sections that's being introduced in the bill is part 8 is being added. And I'm just going to pull that up in the comments here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's under section 10 of *The Municipalities Amendment Act*, the Act that we're talking about. It's a new division 8. And this is when I spoke about earlier the new definition of additional service areas. This division is entitled "Additional Service Areas." And it talks about these extra layers of municipal governance that are required where there are areas with additional services being required.

So what this does is it gives the RM, or the rural municipal council, the authority by bylaw to establish these areas and to provide additional services or levels of services that are different, much like the definition that I referred to earlier, and then "to provide for the ongoing operation and maintenance of services and infrastructure in the additional service area that were originally funded pursuant to *The Planning and Development Act* . . ." So you can see where's there a move from the types of provisions in *The Planning and Development Act* to now having it dealt with through the rural municipalities Act.

The second part of the clause, 48.1(2), goes on to say that the RM council shouldn't establish an additional service area that is specific to an individual residential, commercial, industrial, or agricultural property. So you can see this isn't meant to serve the needs of one person who happens to start up a business, but it should be for a group of businesses or an area that has been developed in that sort of fashion.

Now I'm not sure whether the Global Transportation Hub would be one of the areas where this additional service area would be required, but it certainly seems it would fit in, or that type of arrangement would fit into this new service area.

The next section in this division 8 says that before passing the bylaw to establish an additional service area, the council has to provide public notice and call a public meeting. There must be a certified copy of the bylaw passed and forwarded to the minister under subsection (4). And then under subsection (5) it deals with the taxation or the fees required to cover the costs. So certainly the municipality's going to want to have the tools it needs to provide the additional level of taxation for this type of additional service area, which really seems to make a lot of sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So that's one of the . . . One of the main goals of this bill is to give the municipalities that tool to add those types of service areas to ensure that the sophistication and the layering of activity within the rural municipality is ably covered, not only within the bylaw authority, but also in the ability of the RM to assess the proper fees and levies and taxes on that more complex or more sophisticated area of activity within the rural municipality. So it's not intended to cover the whole RM but it gives them these tools and these flexible tools to deal with what the minister describes in his comments as more urban type services.

And I think this really raises the question of, you know, what is the role of rural municipalities now, in a day and age where there are urban type activities. People are building large homes. If you go drive by Saskatoon, every time I drive from Saskatoon to Regina, when the roads are somewhat decent, I take time to have a quick peek at the beautiful new homes that are being established. We have subdivisions that are springing up. And obviously the servicing required in those subdivisions is not what you would typically think of as activities within a rural municipality. It's very associated to urban activity, so it may be a bit of an identity crisis going on for some of these RMs that are near urban areas. And certainly they want to be able to capture that and provide a better level of service for all of their ratepayers. But you know, this kind of amendment makes a lot of sense in terms of giving them the tools they need.

I guess there's other things in the minister's comments about requests coming from SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and SUMA, and the Saskatchewan urban municipalities Act. And these are things relating to, provisions related to municipal debt limits. Also the whole idea of these new service areas came from SARM itself, so this is a response of this government to the needs of the folks that are working in those rural communities.

And then at the end — this is basically the end of my comments at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this bill — but there's a whole host of small-level amendments that bring some ability for consistency, clarity, and revision and understanding, better understandings, better elucidations of the clause to make it more understandable and useful for the people that are interpreting the clauses.

So I think at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would be the

extent of the comments I'm going to have on this bill. I know that other of my colleagues would like to have an opportunity to make a few more comments before we move this over to the committee level. So at this point I'm pleased to adjourn debate on Bill No. 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*, adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 73, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 74

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 74** — *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again today to enter into the debate on Bill No. 74, *An Act to amend The Cities Act*. And I feel like, as I said earlier, it's like déjà vu all over again. In fact this is apparently another part of the tool kit, how this government is dealing with the rapid growth of development around our cities, and how do we plan for that? How do we plan for those changes? And this is an important part of that.

Last night I was talking about *The Municipalities Amendment Act* . . . Because when I read the minister's speech, it's almost identical. It's almost identical. And I guess that makes sense because he's just talking about the other partners, talking about the cities aspect. Last night I was talking about the municipalities aspect. So it fits together really well.

[16:45]

And so we'll take some time before the end of the day to review this, and I think it's important. Clearly this is an issue, and it needs to be talked about, that he wanted to note that Saskatchewan now has 16 cities. And Warman became the 16th just in October. So congratulations to the folks in Warman, the 16th city. This is exciting news as our communities are growing, and this is good news for our province.

And of course this is one that we have to make sure, when we have our communities growing at such a rate, that there is appropriate planning and there's appropriate mechanisms to make sure that the kind of lifestyle and kind of communities that we've grown used to in Saskatchewan continue to be that case, continue to be that case to make sure that we have excellent roads, we have excellent water, we have excellent waste management systems, excellent police and security systems — all the things that make our communities strong. And at the same time we make sure that we honour and respect the challenges that are happening in rural Saskatchewan. And when this kind of growth happens, it puts pressures on all of us in many unintended ways. And so when we have this kind of

legislation come forward, we want to make sure that it's done in the appropriate manner.

And so this is what the minister brings forward, *The Cities Amendment Act*, and it talks about how we're going to as a province deal with the rapid growth, the extreme pressures that we are seeing on the edge of our cities. And of course we want to make sure that when we do this — it's like planning for sustainable growth — that we're also talking about all areas of growth, whether it's in the inner cities, infill, how can we make the most . . . And I know in Saskatoon we're talking about how do we plan for growth with the brownfield developments that are downtown.

And I know the city has been talking, and it ranges somewhere I think between 5 and 10,000 people that they would like to see downtown between Idylwyld and 1st and the old city yards, as they move out to the edge of the city, because we want to make sure our downtown areas are vibrant as well. And I do want to highlight that, and we'll be talking about that in terms of when we do our planning to make sure our core community's as strong as possible, that our cities are both compact, that we have vibrant downtowns and people are feeling safe and secure there, and they receive the services. And we see — and this is a challenge even within our school systems where we see the challenges of new communities being built on the edge of the city demanding new schools — where downtown, some of the schools are underutilized, but they can't be forgotten. They have their own challenges, and they have building needs and repairs and that type of thing.

And so clearly these are the challenges of growth, and we have to make sure that our plans and our supports and resources are there and that we don't take it for granted or that we create what they call the doughnut effect in our cities — that everything happens on the edge of the cities, and then you're left with a hollowing-out effect in our downtown communities, our core communities. That's a real shame because in many ways that's where the true beauty of our cities are, from my perspective anyways.

My home is in downtown Saskatoon in Caswell community, but I spend a lot of time downtown here when we're in the city doing our provincial work. And so I think it's an important aspect. So I'm going to have questions about that I think in committee, that we talk about not only the growth in the edges of our cities but how can we also help mitigate that by planning for growth downtown. But there are challenges and particularly when it comes to infrastructure. That's a huge, huge issue.

So the minister talks about the bill wants to do four things. First, they want to talk about how to improve the processes related to boundary alterations or annexations to make it work better for both the cities and the municipalities that are involved, and how they would incorporate using the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to do that growth strategy. And I talked at length about that in terms of some of the issues, some of the changes to the Municipal Board and what they can do or can't do. And I think that's important that they're utilized in a fair and appropriate fashion.

Second, they want to respond to requests for amendments for consistent authorities and treatments regarding such things,

matters as unpaid utility charges and trailer home permitting — very interesting challenges. And when you got *The Cities Act* up, you've opened, you might as well be dealing with some of these other issues, and I think that they're important.

Third, how they can support the intent of agreements of New West Partnership and the Agreement on Internal Trade in areas such as businesses, business licensing, and municipal procurement.

Now one that they haven't talked about and we would have questions about is CETA [Canada-European Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement], C-E-T-A. And I think that's the European trade agreement. And what are the impacts on this as well? I know there's been a lot of questions raised around CETA and what might be the impacts of that. So we would have questions around that. Clearly that's important. It's important that we talk.

And we know that there was some questions, and many of us received emails last week from a steel company when they felt that they were unfairly treated because they missed out on a major contract on a project in Saskatoon. And it was basically because when we enter into these agreements that it's a level playing field across Canada. But some provinces haven't entered into them so they can then have preferential treatment within their own province but then take advantage of the level playing field in the other provinces. That does seem unfair, but I guess when we sign the agreements that this is what we're talking about. This is what we have.

And fourthly, address other issue requests from the municipal sector to clarify wording and improve consistency in municipal administrative matters. And that could talk about education property tax reporting, licence fees, and purchasing policies. And so as I talked about earlier in terms of *The Municipalities Act*, that there is a process for dealing with boundary issues and particularly when one party to the discussion is uncooperative and is in fact causing problems just by not dealing with the problems at hand. And you know, at one point we do have to, we have to come to terms with this. But we do have to make sure that we're not bullying or intimidating; we're making sure that voices are being heard, that they're being treated with respect.

And in this process of having a new time limit on how long a municipality must wait for a response on a proposed annexation application is a suitable one, and we will have more questions on it. So what happens when they respond? Or what happens in terms of, is there a process of binding arbitration? We're not sure about that, and we'll have many questions about that. But the idea of requiring mediation before the SMB, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, makes a lot of sense and so that's very good. And it talks about how the . . . And this is in the legislation that's before the House, clarifying that an application may be amended, withdrawn, and all of that type of thing. So the SMB becomes much more active. And of course it only makes sense because we're seeing a growth around our cities that we haven't seen in many, many years and so we have to be ready for this. So we're seeing much more of this type of thing.

And I think that it is interesting that the issue around city utility

charges and permitting for trailer homes, something that SUMA brought forward so clearly, you know, and I haven't seen here. And it was interesting that the minister, here is what he said:

Mr. Speaker, the ministry consulted extensively on these amendments with the city sector, including individual cities and city officials as well as with SUMA and the Saskatchewan Association of City Clerks [and] other stakeholder groups . . .

You know, earlier today we were debating the planning amendment Act, that Bill 90 that just came out, and he didn't use that phrase. And this government is often very proud of its consultation. In fact if they consult — now this is what I said earlier but many of you may not have heard this — but if they consult with one or just a few, they often use the fact that they've consulted extensively and we, on this side of the House, have come to hear that that's maybe a bit of a stretch.

And so here they're talking about that but this is a question we'll have, I know, about Bill 90, one of the tools in this tool kit about how to deal with this issue that's happening on the outskirts of our cities and our RMs about how do we make this happen. Did they do consultation? But here on this one they did, and that's very, very interesting. But on the other one, they were silent and that to me creates a lot of problems, a lot of room for some questions.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that that's questions about consultations. But I do want to take a minute to really also underline that we are going to be asking questions about what does it mean to support the intent of the agreements of New West Partnership and Agreement on Internal Trade when it comes to municipal procurement, and what are the limits around that, particularly when it comes to we've heard a lot of discussion around water, waste management, that type of thing. So what are the limitations, parameters around in municipal procurement? That will be I know of interest to many of my constituents because obviously they're hearing a lot of discussions about the many trade agreements that this government is interested in getting involved in. What are the real implications, and is it wise to do that? And do we at the end of the day become in an unfortunate circumstance that we wish we hadn't, where we would like to support more of our own local businesses but we can't because we've signed on to these agreements? That's really a challenge for all of us.

And so I think that we'll be having many questions on that and we would hope that the minister would be prepared to answer those questions because when we go down that line — and this has been many years from different agreements, whether it's NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] or the free trade agreements — what has been the implication for us?

And so while this seems really straightforward, I think it's going to be an interesting evening when we talk about these all together with questions. But I know many of my colleagues have comments they want to get on the record. And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of Bill No. 74, *An Act to amend The Cities Act*. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it

the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the work of committees this evening, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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