



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

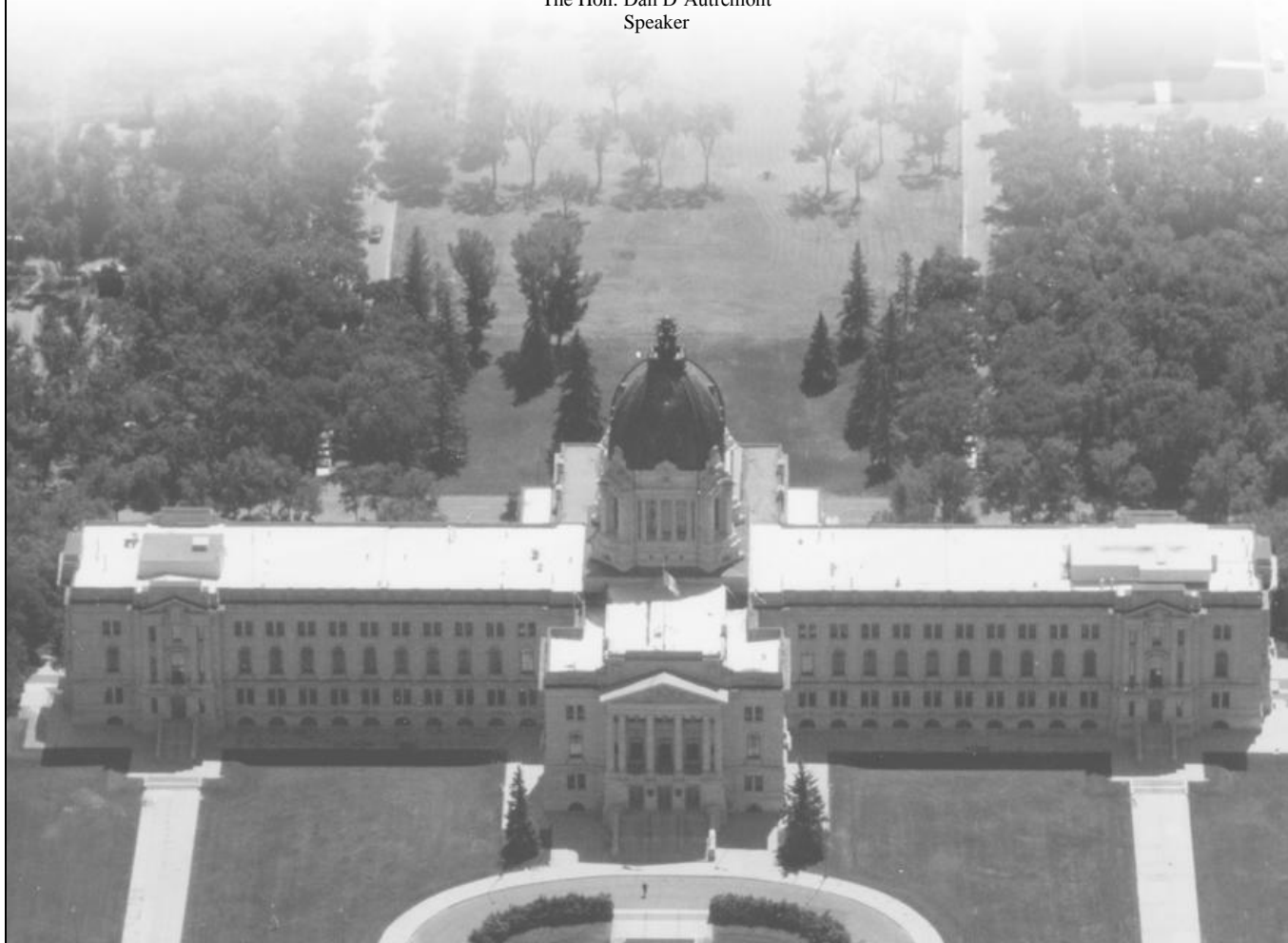
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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 — Cam Broten

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, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, 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]

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Operating Under New Rules and Procedures

**The Speaker:** — I'd like to inform the House at this time that we are now operating under our new rules and proceedings as approved by the fifth report of the House Services Committee.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — I request leave to make an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Agriculture has asked for leave to do an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, it's my honour to introduce Chad and Darlene Krikau to their Legislative Assembly. Chad and Darlene, along with their two children, Liam and Kalyna, own and operate Stream Stick Farms Ltd. near Waldheim, Saskatchewan. This couple received the 2013 Saskatchewan Outstanding Young Farmers Award at Canada's Farm Progress Show last June.

The outstanding young farmers program recognizes farmers and couples who exemplify excellence in their profession. To be recognized by the outstanding young farmers program is no small feat. Winning this provincial award is a true testament of the Krikau's hard work, innovation, and dedication to their business.

Chad began his grain-farming career by renting 110 acres of land from his father in 2007. The Krikau's owned and cropped 531 acres, steadily expanding their operations to just over 2,600 acres today. Chad and Darlene are also active in the community. They are committed volunteers and strong advocates for agriculture, taking the time to teach kids about where their food comes from.

I would like to thank the Krikau's for their contributions to Saskatchewan's agricultural industry. This couple is a shining example of the many hard-working farm families we have in the province, and they are very worthy of this award.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Krikau's will be attending the outstanding young farmers national event at the Canadian Western Agribition this week. At this event, the winners of each provincial Outstanding Young Farmers Award

are honoured, and one national award winner is chosen. I would ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Chad and Darlene the best of luck at the national event later this week during Agribition and to welcome them to their legislature.

And before I do so, joining Chad and Darlene is Franck Groeneweg from Edgeley, Saskatchewan. Franck and his wife, Kari, were Saskatchewan's 2011 outstanding young farmers.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too on behalf of the official opposition would like to welcome the Krikau's to their Legislative Assembly and express our gratitude and thanks for the leadership that you show in the agricultural community in Saskatchewan, and just want to wish you all the very best this week at Agribition where we're rooting for you. So all the best, and welcome to your legislature.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a group of young and really exceptional leaders from the University of Regina's Students' Union. They are President Nathan Sgrazzutti, Brooke Paterson, Mitch Simpson, and Michael Young. Brooke is the vice-president of external affairs, Mitch is the vice-president of operations and finance, and Michael is the vice-president of student affairs.

I was able to have a meeting with these student leaders today. They are erudite. They are articulate. They're inspiring. In short these are strong leaders for the University of Regina, but they're also strong leaders for the province of Saskatchewan. It was a delight to meet with them. I look forward to an ongoing conversation. I'll ask all members to join me in welcoming these young leaders to their Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming these student leaders from the University of Regina to their Legislative Assembly.

In addition to the accolades bestowed upon them by the minister, I also understand that President Sgrazzutti is quite a rugby player as well. And I know from seeing them around in the community, Mr. Speaker, the work that they've done on behalf of students, but in particular the impressive work that they've done on behalf of two international students, Victoria and Favour. It was work well placed, and of course that effort continues.

We look forward to meeting with the folks from the student union — President Sgrazzutti, Brooke Paterson, Mitch Simpson, and Mike Young — I believe next week with the Regina MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], and again to join with the minister opposite in welcoming these leaders to their Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce three very special guests who are seated in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome to the legislature Keri Ziegler, CEO [chief executive officer] of the CPA [Chartered Professional Accountant] Saskatchewan Joint Venture and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan; Betty Hoffart, CEO of the Certified Management Accountants of Saskatchewan; and Regan Exner, representing the board of governors of the Certified General Accountants of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals will gladly give up their titles of their respective separate accounting organizations as they merge into one unifying organization, which will be made possible through *The Accounting Profession Act* which was recently introduced in the House. I'd ask all members to welcome these three individuals to their legislature.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to join with the minister opposite and welcome these leaders within the accounting profession in our province to their legislature. Ms. Keri Ziegler, Ms. Betty Hoffart, Regan Exner, thank you for being here today.

More importantly, thank you for being involved in the crafting of the Act that's been brought forward and what it will mean to the profession and to the designation. I know that in many ways the potential is here, that Saskatchewan is able to be one of the first to bring forward this Act. And we recognize as well how important this is to the accounting professional as it interfaces and connects with an international community.

So we commend you on your involvement in the crafting of this legislation. We look forward to a little bit of consultation with you as we move forward. But quite simply, thanks for your leadership here in our province.

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Minister of Advanced Education and recognize the leadership from the University of Regina but also maybe identify one person that's sitting in the gallery. I know the Minister of Advanced Education called him Mitch Simpson, but we like to know him as Mitch The Hammer Simpson.

Mr. Speaker, Mitch is turning quite red. But Mitch is a good friend of our two boys, Craig and Mark, and has been part of the TV show, a major part of the show that showed him as a character that has some great ideas but doesn't quite get it done. And I want to tell you that that's a TV show, so you can't always believe what you see. But in this case, you can believe what you . . . No, no. Great, great friend of the boys, and I think he's in a couple more episodes of the eight episodes that will be aired over the next coming Fridays on MTV. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members, I would like to introduce three individuals seated in the east gallery, two are constituents and one is a resident of Saskatoon also. Jordon Cooper and his son Mark Cooper, and anyone who reads *The StarPhoenix* or is on Twitter knows that Jordon has varied interests and enjoys instigating a good debate from time to time, and his son Mark who's in grade 8 at Westmount School. They're great individuals in our community, live just a few blocks away from us.

And also with them today is Chris Powell, lives in Saskatoon now, but anyone who speaks with Chris will hear that he's from Georgia. And so he's weathered a few Saskatchewan winters, and he and his family now live in Saskatoon. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these individuals to the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join the Minister of Agriculture and the opposition critic in welcoming Chad and Darlene Krikau to their Legislative Assembly. They're residents of the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency. And I'd also like to take the opportunity to congratulate them on their award as Saskatchewan Outstanding Young Farmers Award. As well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just take a moment to thank them for the other efforts that they take time out of their daily life to come in and communicate at different announcements like Agriculture in the City. I can think where they come in to Saskatoon and communicate to people some of the processes and practices that they have on their farm, and do their part in communicating the safe and sustainable agricultural production that we have here in Saskatchewan.

So thank you very much for that. And I'd like all members to join with me in welcoming them not only to their Assembly, but wishing them the best of luck as they go on to the national farm awards. So thank you very much.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for increased support for education. And we know that education is one of the most vital services that the government provides to the citizens. And we know that this government has failed to provide adequate education funding and that this government would rather talk about standardized testing than hear from teachers and parents about addressing the real needs of today's classrooms. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to immediately prioritize education by laying out a long-term vision and a plan with the necessary resources to provide the best quality education for Saskatchewan that reflects Saskatchewan's demographic and population changes, that is based on proven educational best

practices, that is developed through consultation with the education sector, and that builds strong educational infrastructure to serve students and communities long into the future.

[Mr. Speaker], as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of Far Reserve Road. This road is used as the main road into the regional landfill which is operated by a tripartite agreement between the communities of La Ronge, Air Ronge, and Lac La Ronge Indian Band. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to pave Far Reserve Road, which has not been given the proper resources by this government. The dust on the road is causing respiratory problems for our elders and community members. It is also creating poor visibility for drivers, as this is a safety issue, in that we have students walking along the side of the road, very dusty, to schools. The road has a high volume of traffic and that this is the only way to the regional dump.

It is signed by many northern residents. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of replacing the gym at Sacred Heart Community School. The undersigned residents bring to your attention the following: that the gym at Sacred Heart Community School in North Central Regina has quite literally fallen apart. It's been closed since last March and is no longer safe for students and staff. They point out that they've raised this issue with the Sask Party government for a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

They point out that any school needs a gym as a place for the school and the community to gather together to engage in cultural and educational activities and to promote physical activity which is good for the mind, body, and spirit of all children. They point out that the gym at Sacred Heart has played an important role in the school's efforts to become a literacy leader, having served as a gathering place for the very successful reading assemblies and reading nights.

They point out that the Sacred Heart Community School is the largest school in North Central Regina with 450-plus students, 75 per cent of whom are First Nations and Métis. They point that enrolment has increased by 100 students over the past four years and that attendance and learning outcomes are steadily improving. And they point out that as a matter of basic fairness and common sense, Sacred Heart Community School needs a gym.

In the prayer that reads as follows:

They respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Sask Party provincial government to immediately commit to the replacement of the gymnasium of Sacred Heart Community School.

This petition is signed by citizens from the city of Saskatoon here in the fine province of Saskatchewan. I so present.

[13:45]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand today to present a petition, and the petition is in reference to the rental purchase option program also known as RPO. The family that has signed the petition and that presented the petitions were supposed to be proud homeowners in their community. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly cause the Saskatchewan Party government to restore the RPO rent-to-own option for responsible renters in northern Saskatchewan, allowing them the dignity of owning their own homes and building the community in our province's beautiful North.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition was signed by many residents of northern Saskatchewan, and on this particular page, it is primarily from the Lac La Ronge area. And I so present.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Support for the Philippines

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, we are blessed as a province to have many Filipino families calling Saskatchewan their second home. In fact I am blessed to have many Filipino families living right in my own constituency. I've had the pleasure of getting to know many of them and experiencing their legendary hospitality and friendship.

My thoughts and prayers have been with them over the last several days as news of Typhoon Haiyan has filled our TV screens and Twitter feeds. The storm was particularly devastating to eastern and central coastal provinces, and it is reported to have affected the lives of nine million people in the Philippines. This disaster came only three weeks after a 7.1-magnitude earthquake that killed hundreds.

Richard Gordon, head of Philippine Red Cross, describes the situation on the ground in the Philippines as absolute bedlam. I can only imagine the difficulty of being so far from loved ones in their times of need. I'm pleased to see the provincial government has committed \$250,000 in immediate aid, and the federal government has committed to match charitable donations until December 8th.

As Filipino families rally to support their loved ones back home, I hope all members of this Assembly and all Saskatchewan people will rally around them so they truly feel

supported here in their second home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

### Province Boasts Lowest Unemployment Rate in Canada

**Ms. Campeau:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Statistics Canada reported in its October labour force survey that employment numbers have taken quite a jump in our province, with 14,900 more people working in Saskatchewan now than this time last year.

For the 10th straight month, Saskatchewan has held the lowest unemployment rate in Canada at 3.6 per cent. This is well below the 6.9 per cent reported nationally, Mr. Speaker. In addition to having lower unemployment than every other province, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's rate is now lower than 49 of the 50 US [United States] states. Our province's biggest cities also boasted impressive job numbers, with Regina and Saskatoon having the two lowest unemployment rates of all Canadian cities at 3.6 per cent and 4.4 per cent respectively.

Mr. Speaker, this job growth in the province indicates increasing opportunities for all citizens in all demographics. Off-reserve Aboriginal employment was up by 3,800 positions for nine consecutive months of year-over-year increases. Aboriginal youth employment was also up by 1,800.

Mr. Speaker, having the strongest job market in the country is just another reason to promote the Saskatchewan advantage to the rest of the nation and the world. I would like to thank all of the workers and the entrepreneurs in our province for helping achieve these wonderful results and helping move Saskatchewan forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Regina Thunder Wins Canadian Championship

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that Saskatchewan is a hotbed of Canadian football. Our history and tradition of amateur and professional football runs deep in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, we all know that respect on the gridiron must be earned, and it's certainly enhanced by winning a championship.

The Regina Thunder were established 14 years ago to fill the void created by the Regina Rams' move to the university level. This past weekend the Regina Thunder took their rightful place among Saskatchewan's historic football programs. On Saturday, in their first appearance in the Canadian Bowl, the Regina Thunder beat the Vancouver Island Raiders 55 to 26 at Mosaic Stadium, capturing their first Canadian junior football championship and cementing their place in Saskatchewan's rich football history.

Mr. Speaker, special congratulations go to first-year head coach Scott MacAulay, who also played on the very first Thunder team 14 years ago. Coach MacAulay has experienced first-hand the ups and downs that come with starting a team from scratch, and he is quick to emphasize that it's not a one-person show. He credits the influence of past Thunder coaches since the team's

inception — Randy Shaw, Dwayne Ell, and Irwin Klempler — as well as all of the alumni who never got a chance to experience a championship.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in congratulating every Regina Thunder player, coach, alumni, parent, trainer, board member, sponsor, and volunteer on their very first Canadian championship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Affordable Housing for Prince Albert

**Ms. Jurgens:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House to inform all members that construction is beginning on a new 30-unit rental housing project in Prince Albert.

Like other communities across our province, Prince Albert is growing. With that growth comes challenges in meeting the need for safe and affordable housing. That's why in our plan for growth, Mr. Speaker, our government committed to addressing the need for new, medium-density, multiple-unit housing. How we are doing that in part is by selling close to 300 single-family units in Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, and Regina, and then we are reinvesting those proceeds into new housing in those communities.

The addition of the 30 new units in Prince Albert will help meet a real need for affordable housing in our community.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that good housing is at the heart of individual and community well-being, and it helps maintain a strong economy and a high quality of life. That's why I am pleased to inform this legislature that our government, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, was able to reinvest \$5.6 million in the new rental units in Prince Albert. This project, and others like it, supports our government's goal of improving housing availability and affordability across our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Local Store Wins Top Independent Grocer Award

**Mr. Lawrence:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in congratulating South Hill Fine Foods on behalf of all the residents of Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, South Hill Fine Foods was recently awarded the Top Independent Grocer of the Year in the small surface category for 2013. The award was handed out at the 51st Annual Canadian Independent Grocer of the Year Awards Ceremony in Toronto and is the most prestigious award of the organization. The ceremony was held in front of a gala audience of over 500 leading grocers, suppliers, and distributors at the country's premier grocery conference and trade show.

Mr. Speaker, South Hill Fine Foods is just down the street from my constituency office and I can attest to the constant stream of

customers, including my family, going in and out their doors. The staff are always eager to assist and also exceptionally friendly. It is truly a first-class neighbourhood grocery store where you can always feel welcome and your business appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Harry and Shannon Watson, Dana Lougheed, and Perry Chambers for their strong presence in the community and their dedication to top quality products and services to all of us in the Moose Jaw area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### 4-H Celebrates 100th Anniversary

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize that November is 4-H Month. 4-H is one of the longest running and largest youth organizations in Canada, and 2013 marks its 100th anniversary. Mr. Speaker, for 100 years the 4-H program has strived to encourage individual growth and leadership in young people by developing self-confidence, the ability to make wise decisions, and a responsible attitude towards community service.

4-H has had a prominent presence in Saskatchewan and is an organization which truly understands youth and their need to be involved, accepted, valued, and heard. There are over 200 4-H clubs and over 900 4-H leaders across the province, and I myself was a 4-H leader for over 15 years, Mr. Speaker. Although the 4-H program has its roots in rural Saskatchewan, 4-H Saskatchewan serves all youth throughout the province who are 6 to 25 years of age and of all racial, cultural, economic, and social backgrounds. Mr. Speaker, our government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, supports 4-H in Saskatchewan with a \$300,000 grant this year.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing 4-H and all the great leaders taking part in this organization across our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Support for Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr. Brkich:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not often this side of the House agrees with the opposition members on issues. In fact it's pretty rare, Mr. Speaker. So our members were happy when the members of the opposition, especially the members from Athabasca and Regina Lakeview, voiced their support on hydraulic fracturing in our province. Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite were a little surprised by the debate last week. They said this had been the NDP's [New Democratic Party] position for quite some time. Really? But, Mr. Speaker, we don't know what the NDP's position is on just about anything anymore since they've taken down every bit of policy they've ever had off their website.

You know, Mr. Speaker, our government supports fracking and the economic development it brings to our province. It's part of the reason Saskatchewan has the lowest unemployment rate in

the country, the second lowest rate in North America. It's part of the reason we've been able to pay down the provincial debt. It's part of the reason our new hospitals, schools, and roads are being built across the province. Now that we know we're on the same page with the members opposite on fracking, that we agree that it is a safe, responsible practice being done in the oil and gas industry, we hope they will be speaking to the federal leader and trying to change his opinion against our oil and gas industry.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Infrastructure and Funding in Prairie Spirit School Division

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not just teachers, Mr. Speaker, that are very upset with this government's approach to education. School boards are also very frustrated.

The Chair of the Prairie Spirit School Division recently wrote a very pointed letter to the Premier. The letter outlines significant concerns about this government's failure to properly consult and engage with elected school boards as well as front-line educators. It also raised concerns, Mr. Speaker, about budget shortfalls and this government's failure to support local innovation.

My question to the Premier: has he read the letter? Does he accept the specific criticisms that are identified, Mr. Speaker, or does he simply dismiss them?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think the local MLA and various ministers of Education have been discussing with trustees from this particular division, from this part of the province — and also with mayors and other community leaders and, very significantly, parents — about the need for a new school in Prairie Spirit, Mr. Speaker, including Mayor Muench and Mayor Spence who I believe are on the record as supporting the government's announcement for new schools coming — the new joint-use school — that are referenced for two communities in that particular division.

Mr. Speaker, we note as well that this year enrolment alone up 256 students. Mr. Speaker, we note that enrolments overall have increased 14 per cent in the area, that Martensville school is at 235 per cent of capacity.

We've also said though pretty clearly that, as we move forward with new schools, they will be joint-use in the truest sense of the word. They will share infrastructure. We will achieve savings on a joint school use basis just as we are in the Chinook School Division with the school under way, Mr. Speaker, in my hometown. We'll engage with the school division certainly and talk to them about their specific concerns, but we're building new schools there and in the member's riding. We wish he'd be supportive of it.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, we support new schools and, as we've said, we want them done in the smartest way, the cheapest way, and the fastest way. And we'll get into the discussion, Mr. Speaker, about the schools.

But my question to the Premier was whether or not he accepts the criticisms that are made in this letter from the Chair of the school division. And one area of great concern identified in the letter, Mr. Speaker, has to do with funding shortfalls. Here's what the board Chair says, "We are anticipating another \$1.5 million decrease to our budget next year. The strong student achievement results in our school division cannot be sustained with this ongoing funding shortfall." The letter also says, "Another budget shortfall for our school division will mean further cuts to staff and programs despite a growing school population."

My question to the Premier: can he guarantee that the Prairie Spirit School Division will not yet face again budget cuts?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, once again it's important to check the facts of the Leader of the Opposition in question period. I will note though, before I do that, that the Minister of Education and the MLA for the area will be meeting with the board on the 15th of this month, I believe it is, when they're there to announce a brand new school in Warman built by this side of the House, together with trustees.

Mr. Speaker, I also would note for the Hon. Leader of the Opposition that, for the first time ever, our budget provided \$98 million to Prairie Spirit, the first time ever that projected enrolments were recognized in a budget, Mr. Speaker — \$3.6 million increase for projected enrolments even as members opposite planned for decline when they were in office, part of the reason that we're playing catch-up now, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, \$13 million for supports for learning . . . Well they're in the budget. The Deputy Leader's shaking his head. Facts are stubborn things, Mr. Speaker, including the fact that since we took office, operating funding for this part of the province, for education there, is up 24.2 per cent.

[14:00]

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the specific concerns raised in the letter by the Chair of the board of the school division, Mr. Speaker, those were not my words. Those were his words in a letter, Mr. Speaker, talking about the budget shortfall that they've experienced and what that will mean for their students in the coming year if they face yet another cut.

Another key concern raised by the Chair, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the space crunch the students are facing today. Valley Manor Elementary School in Martensville, Mr. Speaker, is currently at 235 per cent capacity. By next year, Mr. Speaker, there will be 20 portable classrooms attached to the school. To put that in context, there are only 11 classrooms in the original school building.

The Chair's letter, Mr. Speaker, makes it clear that they need and support a new school, but they also state, Mr. Speaker, that that's not enough with respect to the current crunch faced and the innovative solutions that they have brought forward. Something needs to be done now. However, Mr. Speaker, when this board brought forward an innovative solution, it was simply dismissed by the ministry. My question to the Premier: why?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a valid debate to have in the legislature. I would hope again that the Leader of the Opposition might recognize the fact that this government has built a new school in Warman for middle years. The expansion at the Martensville High School is under way, and it's going to be completed, Mr. Speaker, within a year. And significantly that we've just announced the construction of effectively 18 new schools, and two of the joint-use schools for this area exactly, and they will use an innovative partnership, Mr. Speaker.

I will also note that a week ago, that member stood up on education issues in his Speech from the Throne, and he intimated this: that in The Battlefords there were kids wearing winter coats in classes because, and I quote, "The heat was turned down as a result of budget constraints by this provincial government." These are his words. We also have a letter from a school division, Mr. Speaker, from the director of education for Living Sky School Division. It says this:

My understanding is that in the legislature on November 5th, inaccurate information about Living Sky School Division was reported as factual. The implication is that students are currently in classrooms in North Battleford with coats on because the board of education has instructed staff that the heat be turned down. This is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, so with respect to this issue or the one we're debating today . . . Well they noted by the way that this did happen in the past, in the long past when members opposite were in power, Mr. Speaker, when no schools were being built and education was underfunded by the NDP.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the situation the students experienced in The Battlefords area were reported, Mr. Speaker. What we see here with the Premier's response is really the take-home theme in the letter written by the Chair of the school division. And it's that this Premier and this government, Mr. Speaker, has a dismissive approach. When a concern is raised — legitimate concerns about funding, about buildings, about local innovation, Mr. Speaker — it's just dismissed, Mr. Speaker.

This Prairie Spirit School Division proposed a Sprung building approach to address the extreme space crunch that they have in Martensville. A Sprung building is already going ahead in Martensville High School and will house the largest physical activity complex in the entire province. Here's what the Chair says, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier:

At a time when effective practices and innovation are being encouraged, this approach was dismissed by the



ministry. As a result, our students and staff members continue to struggle in cramped quarters. Prairie Spirit would encourage the government to reconsider this decision and continue the discussion to find an innovative solution to our urgent need in Martensville.

Not my words, Mr. Speaker — the Chair of the school division. My question to the Premier: will you listen to these concerns and support an innovative solution for the space needs in Martensville?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — He just said, not my words, but his words. He said, Mr. Speaker, in the Legislative Assembly, on his feet, in this school in North Battleford that “The heat was turned down as a result of budget constraints forced by this provincial government.” When faced with the facts from that school division, I would expect that Leader of the Opposition to stand up and say that he was wrong, that he ought not to have said it without checking his facts.

And with respect to the Leader of the Opposition’s question, he’s saying, why won’t the government support an innovative plan to build schools in this area? And it’s precisely what this government is doing, Mr. Speaker: 18 schools, nine joint-use P3s, Mr. Speaker, the kind of joint-use that actually achieves savings. In Alberta it saved a quarter of a billion dollars in terms of the school approach they took on bundling and also on joint-use facilities, Mr. Speaker. We’re going to move ahead. In terms of this particular riding, this particular school board area, we are building new schools, we are expanding schools, with two more to come, two more joint-use schools. When will members opposite stop playing politics and support new schools in Saskatchewan?

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

#### Health Care Conditions and Staffing

**Ms. Chartier:** — Bob Laurie had a letter in the paper last week saying:

... our acute-care and long-term care facilities have been reduced to embarrassingly inadequate staffing levels, infection control has become compromised due to non-replacement of environmental service workers, and we appear to be moving away from the goal of providing high-quality, compassionate care to patients and residents.

To the minister: does he agree with Bob Laurie’s concerns or does he stubbornly dismiss them?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly take the words of Mr. Laurie very seriously, Mr. Speaker. We take that under advisement as we look to build budgets for our health regions, Mr. Speaker, knowing that our health regions have received significant increases to employ full-time and part-time workers across the system, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will know from the discussion in this legislature over the last number of years when we looked just at long-term care facilities — knowing that we’re dealing with the same number of long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker, the same number of beds, Mr. Speaker, as we were when the members opposite were government — there are now 700 more full-time equivalents working in long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to address issues around staffing and the quality of care that we can provide, Mr. Speaker, and we are very pleased to stand on our record in this regard.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, the Health minister can keep dismissing those concerns and keep questioning the stories that are coming to light, but we keep hearing more and more details that show how real, how real those concerns are.

The opposition learned over the weekend that there’s a rodent infestation at the cancer clinic here in Regina. To the minister . . . And the member from Estevan laughs. To the minister: is he aware of this, and what is he doing to ensure patient safety is not compromised?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think one only has to look to this government’s record when it comes to the proper staffing levels within our health care system, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will know that in the last days of the NDP government, it was well known through the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and other organizations that we were short 800 nurses in this province, registered nurses in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what did this government do? It signed a partnership, a historic partnership with SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses]. It worked towards addressing the 800 gap in RNs [registered nurse], Mr. Speaker. And not only did we do that, Mr. Speaker, we exceeded that by over 200, Mr. Speaker, to the point where we have more than 1,000 RNs working in the system than when the members opposite were the government. So we don’t dismiss these issues. In fact we have shown examples, Mr. Speaker, of where we have addressed this.

With regard to the Cancer Agency issue, Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of this but we’ll certainly be looking into this with the Cancer Agency.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Bob Laurie’s letter referenced embarrassingly inadequate staffing levels and significant concerns about infection control due to the non-replacement of cleaning staff. We heard concerns about this from retired nurse Suzanne Stewart. She said the hospital was filthy when she had surgery, and her family had to clean her hospital room and her bathroom

because the staff was stretched too thin. And now we know from internal documents that there is indeed an infestation of mice at the cancer clinic. To the minister: has he heard enough to finally admit that this government has created significant problems in our health care system?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Mr. Speaker, we're always, Mr. Speaker, taking these issues very seriously. That's why, as I've mentioned previously, Mr. Speaker, we knew that there was a large gap in terms of the number of RNs that we need in this province, and we worked hard to address that. We will ongoing, with future partnerships with an organization like the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we know that within long-term care itself, Mr. Speaker, there are 14 per cent more nurses working in long-term care today than there was in 2007. Important to know, Mr. Speaker, when you keep in mind the fact that we're working with roughly the same number of long-term care facilities and the same number of beds that the NDP were when they were government, when the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, elected them . . . or defeated them, Mr. Speaker. A 10 per cent increase in the overall staff within long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, we're working hard to address the other provider unions as well, ensuring that we do have the proper complement of staff, Mr. Speaker. And the budget allocations by this government in six years I think have demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, that we are taking this issue seriously and addressing it.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing that no matter how many stories come forward and how many concerns are raised, this government continues with its no-cause-for-alarm attitude. Last week we heard about a toddler in the Outlook hospital putting her hands into an uncovered container of dirty needles that had been left on the floor. Both of her hands were poked several times by the used needles. The 19-month-old little girl is now on antibiotics and she will have to undergo repeated blood tests over the next two years to screen for infections.

If mice in our cancer clinic aren't a big enough deal for this government, surely this story is. To the minister: has he heard enough to finally admit that this government has created significant problems in our health care system?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the issue that the member opposite raised is certainly one of great concern, the situation in Outlook, Mr. Speaker. We took immediate steps once we were notified, as did the region, Mr. Speaker. The biohazard containers in this treatment area were removed immediately, Mr. Speaker. The region undertook a region-wide audit to ensure that other types of biohazard containers that contained sharps were not in an area that would be accessed in this way, Mr. Speaker.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health issued last week a province-wide safety alert to every single health region in this province as well as the Cancer Agency, instructing them to take immediate action to audit all facilities. They will be reporting back in 30 days on this matter, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue of grave concern, Mr. Speaker, and we are working hard to address these issues. We take them very seriously. We do not dismiss them as the members opposite would have us do, Mr. Speaker, or have us believe that we do. These are issues of great concern.

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

### Response to Futures Fund Report

**Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, late last week the government accidentally leaked its own report on the Saskatchewan futures fund. My question is to the Premier: will he listen to this report and will he commit to putting a cap on the provincial government's reliance on non-renewable resource revenue?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for Regina Lakeview for the question. This is very much under consideration. To the point of the question, there were several recommendations — 10 in fact — in Peter MacKinnon's report. We want to thank him for his work. It was a good piece of work. He's looked at a number of different models from around the world and it appears to me that he is favouring — as many would, I expect — a Norwegian model with a few changes to it to make it a bit more Saskatchewan-friendly, if I could use that term, Mr. Speaker. We're going to consider the report very carefully and there will be a formal response from the government in due course.

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the NDP have been clear that we want the provincial government to reduce its overreliance on the one-time, non-renewable resource revenues. And we also want the provincial government to establish a proper savings fund. Saskatchewan people know that just because you're still paying off your mortgage, it doesn't mean that you don't also save up for your children's education. That's just common sense. And that's exactly the kind of smart growth approach that we've been advocating, and we're pleased to see that Peter MacKinnon also calls for that in his report.

My question is to the Premier: will he listen to this report and will he commit to establishing a savings fund in the next budget?

[14:15]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, thank you. I think it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, to look at the history of this particular issue. There was the Heritage Fund in the province of Saskatchewan which was ended in 1992 after successive administrations didn't use the fund for its proper intended purposes. I think we'd all agree on that.

I also credit the New Democratic Party. In the last election campaign they proposed a futures fund, Mr. Speaker. And after the campaign, although we were honoured to win an historic mandate, we weren't afraid to look at ideas presented by members opposite, to potentially implement them. And that's the genesis for the Peter MacKinnon report.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the New Democrats who went through that historically bad campaign for their side of things and the leader, the interim leader who just asked the question and the current leader, have yet failed to say that they were incorrect about anything, that there were any other ideas. It really was a snowstorm and a whole bunch of reasons why they lost. They're the political equivalent of The Fonz, Mr. Speaker. They can't say that they're wrong — without of course being as cool as The Fonz, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker.

On this side of the House, we'll look at these ideas. Mr. MacKinnon has now tabled his report as a result of the NDP campaigning on this idea, Mr. Speaker. And in the budget or before the budget, we'll more formally respond to the report.

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

#### **Contributions of the Film Industry and Support for Creative Industries**

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, there's a new report out on the economic impact analysis of the film industry, and it's an incredibly positive report, Mr. Speaker. In just the past five years, the film industry has contributed half a billion dollars to the province — but it's not to our province, Mr. Speaker. That half a billion dollars of economic benefit went to the province of Manitoba. To the minister: is the government envious?

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the report out on the film industry in the province of Manitoba. We've chosen a different public policy path here in the province of Saskatchewan. We have in place today, Mr. Speaker, a fund, a \$5 million fund that will benefit all the creative industries in our province. What I would note for the hon. member, in the province of Manitoba the last time I checked, they were running in excess of a \$500 million deficit.

Mr. Speaker, they increased their provincial sales tax this last budget from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, a single mother in Manitoba making \$25,000 or less pays almost 400 per cent more in provincial income tax in the province of Manitoba than here in Saskatchewan. I think that's better public policy, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — The minister should tell that to all the creative people who had to leave this province because of their policy decision. Mr. Speaker, this government drove the film industry out of our province. It was a reckless decision. It not only hurt our arts and culture scene but it left our economy even less

diversified.

The chamber of commerce says our economy is losing \$45 million every year as a result. Meanwhile in neighbouring Manitoba, their economy is reaping the benefits of wise investments — half a billion dollars in just five years. A small investment in the form of a film tax credit means a big payoff.

To the minister: will he admit this government made a mistake, and will he commit to restoring the film employment tax credit?

**The Speaker:** — Before we proceed, I would ask for members to quiet down on their private conversations or take them outside of the Chamber. I recognize the Minister for Parks, Culture and Sport.

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the chamber report is just flat out wrong. It's false economics, Mr. Speaker. They continue to quote the number \$44 million a year in production value. That's production value, Mr. Speaker, of which only 60 per cent is spent in the province of Saskatchewan. The other 40 per cent is spent on the procurement of goods and services outside the province of Saskatchewan where no taxes are paid to this province, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, we have followed a different public policy path in this province, Mr. Speaker. I know the former critic said that nobody in the creative industry contributes to our economy except the film industry. We take a different view on this side, Mr. Speaker. We believe that publishers, the visual artists, the theatrical producers, the musical producers, as well as the film industry . . . Well the member for Saskatoon Riversdale said that on budget day. I can quote it. I can read it for the hon. member for Saskatoon Centre if he would like. Matter of fact, why don't I put it in the record? “. . . is not going to stimulate film production here in Saskatchewan . . . It does nothing for the economy and that's the bottom line,” Mr. Speaker. The member for Saskatoon Riversdale said that.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, the film industry contributed \$74 million to Manitoba in 2009. Last year it contributed \$130 million. Premier Selinger has said, “It shows the industry is maturing and gaining credibility not only in North America but internationally as well.” In fact Premier Selinger says it's a sign that the province's investments in the media industries are paying off. To the minister again: will he admit this government made a mistake and will he commit to restoring the film employment tax credit?

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here we have yet again another example of the NDP suggesting that there's money for anything and everything in the provincial budget, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, last year on budget day the member for Lakeview, the former interim leader of the NDP, said there should be more money for film. And where would we take it? We'd take it from agriculture,

from municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

Now we know that agriculture is still the backbone of our economy in this province. Secondly, we know the infrastructure deficit that exists in both urban and rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to take money away from agriculture and municipalities with respect to infrastructure needs, Mr. Speaker, to chase provincial tax credits that is a race to the bottom, Mr. Speaker. We know the province of Manitoba has engaged in this race in competition with Ontario and Quebec and British Columbia, of which the province of British Columbia is spending in excess of \$400 million in provincial tax credits this year, Mr. Speaker, and they're at 80 per cent unemployment. We've chosen a different public policy path.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, when this government chose to drive the film industry out of our province, it badly hurt our province's arts and culture scene, and that is discouraging. That decision also left our province's economy even less diversified, and we're losing \$45 million a year, every year, as a result. And that's why the chamber of commerce is even frustrated by this decision. Now we look at Manitoba where they are reaping the benefits of a smart investment, yet this government continually, stubbornly dismisses concerns about its decision to scrap the credit. To the minister: why won't the government just admit it made a mistake, and why won't it fix it?

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, just to give the hon. member some advice on the other side, if you're looking for an economic model to follow in Canada, I don't suggest you follow Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that NDP government in Manitoba is running in excess of a \$500 million deficit, Mr. Speaker. They increased their provincial sales tax from 7 to 8 per cent in this last budget. A single mother in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, making \$25,000 or less, pays almost 400 per cent more in provincial income tax in the province of Manitoba than she would pay in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We think that's better public policy.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

#### Supporting Disaster Relief for the Philippines

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of this House, as is the case with people right across our province, all over the world, are very familiar with the devastating effects of Typhoon Haiyan, that that typhoon has left the country completely devastated. Mr. Speaker, I note that the city of Tacloban, a community about the size of Regina, is virtually flattened. A city like ours, like our capital city, utterly destroyed, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine?

At least 10,000 people are dead as a result of the storm. Thousands of homes and businesses have been demolished. And survivors now — and we've seen this unfold on our news

on telecasts and on televisions on a daily basis — survivors are desperate for food, water, and shelter.

Mr. Speaker, the president of the Philippines, Benigno Aquino, has declared a state of national calamity, and that's exactly what this is. It is a calamity, national in scope, Mr. Speaker; we would argue international in its scale. This tragedy has been keenly felt here in our province. We feel it because Saskatchewan today has a stronger connection to the Philippines than ever before, and the connection has always been strong.

In the last three years alone, close to 10,000 of the newcomers settling in our province have come from the Philippines. They have settled in our major cities, but they have also settled in smaller communities in rural and urban Saskatchewan. They have enriched our province beyond measure, and we hope that others will follow them.

Because the Filipino community in this province is comprised of such great citizens, hard-working, community-minded people who are helping build Saskatchewan, it is understandable that the outpouring from Saskatchewan people has been to the degree that it has been already since the typhoon struck. It's because they are our friends and neighbours. We work with them. We do business with them. We socialize with them. We worship with them. And today in their hour of need as they face heartbreak and uncertainty, we want to be there for them. We want to console them. We want to let them know that this province is standing by them, that we support them. Because this is Saskatchewan, and when our friends and neighbours are in trouble, we come to their aid.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we announced that the Government of Saskatchewan will donate \$250,000 to the disaster relief effort in the Philippines. The money will go to the Red Cross, an organization that provides, as we well know, invaluable service and help when natural disasters strike.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see other provinces and the federal government contributing to the relief effort. We note, Mr. Speaker, the federal government has also said they will match the donations of individuals and businesses from our country to go to the relief effort. We also note that thousands of individual Canadians are already standing up for the people of the Philippines. They are already giving, knowing perhaps that the federal government was matching it, but arguably many didn't. They did this long before I think the federal government made their announcement.

We can only imagine, Mr. Speaker, what the great Filipino community is going through today in Saskatchewan as they think about their family and friends at home because we can see what their family and friends are going through in the wake of this storm.

Yesterday I had a chance to speak with both the Filipino consul general and with the Filipino ambassador to our country, His Excellency Leslie Gatan. And, Mr. Speaker, I indicated to both of them that our province was going to be there for them. We offered our prayers, we offered our assistance and anything else we can possibly do to bring relief.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the House to join me in conveying our full support and best wishes to the Filipino people and our commitment to not break faith with Filipinos who live here in our province and contribute much, as they also are facing this tragedy from their homeland. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for those remarks. And as I said earlier on in the proceedings of the Assembly today, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the province is able to make this contribution of \$250,000 to assist with the relief efforts.

And, you know, the remarks that the Premier said about the contributions that Filipinos have made to our province are absolutely true. For generations in the earlier waves of immigration, Filipinos have contributed greatly to Saskatchewan. But as well in more recent years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen many Filipinos choose Saskatchewan as home and make huge contributions. And I know in my . . . as other members of the Assembly know, after being in a Filipino home and experiencing their hospitality, their kindness, their warmth and spirit, their generosity, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we as a province recognize their contributions and help out in a way that we can.

Many Filipinos, Mr. Speaker, are people of very strong faith, whether it's Catholic or whether it's Protestant. And in a Christian tradition we know, Mr. Speaker, that we often extend prayers to other people for their care and hoping for intervention. And it's one thing for us to do that, for me to do that as a non-Filipino, but when it is someone who is thinking of home, thinking of relatives, uncertain about their whereabouts or their safety, thinking about home communities, Mr. Speaker, we know how it's even more important to have those prayers, but it's also important to have action, and faith without works is dead.

So it's appropriate that while we also extend our prayers, we also extend some action. And that's why I'm, as I said before, pleased to see the province stepping up in this way and making a contribution of \$250,000. So with that I would thank the government for doing that, and on behalf of the opposition I extend our best wishes and our prayers to those who are worried about loved ones and worried about home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### 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 101 through 184.

**The Speaker:** — The Government Whip has ordered questions 101 to 184.

[14:30]

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 112 — *The Accounting Profession Act*

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 112, *An Act respecting the Accounting Profession and the Institute of Chartered Professional Accountants of Saskatchewan and making consequential amendments to other Acts* referred to as *The Accounting Profession Act*.

The provisions in this bill, Mr. Speaker, will establish a new self-regulating body called the Institute of Chartered Professional Accountants of Saskatchewan, CPA Sask. This bill will merge the chartered accountants, CAs; certified management accountants, CMAs; and certified general accountants, CGAs into one profession. The proposed Act would grant a new common CPA designation to all CAs, CMAs, and CGAs in Saskatchewan that are in good standing. This Act would replace *The Chartered Accountants Act, 1986*; *The Management Accountants Act*; *The Certified Management Accountants Act*, which was Bill 27 of 1999-2000 not yet proclaimed, Mr. Speaker; and *The Certified General Accountants Act, 1994*. These Acts would be repealed with the proclamation of the new Act.

CAs, CMAs, and CGAs together represent all of the professional accountants in Saskatchewan, with approximately 4,400 members and 970 students. The merger is supported by these groups. Extensive consultation was conducted by the three existing accounting bodies with their membership, and the supportive vote to merge resulted. This merger is part of a broader initiative to merge provincial and national professional accounting associations across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of regulatory and economic benefits of a merger. CPA Sask will operate under a new integrated certification program that is internationally recognized. The new program will combine the best of the existing programs. Unification of the accounting profession creates a modern and streamlined regulatory regime for Saskatchewan's professional accountants, reflecting the best practices of existing organizations, including codes of professional conduct, practice inspection, and disciplinary processes.

An accounting profession and financial regulatory system that is internationally recognized as being robust, competitive, and consistent will better support Saskatchewan's economic objectives. Professional accountants play an invaluable role in Saskatchewan's economy. Major capital investments and financial transactions made in Saskatchewan involve professional accountants.

Introductions of this Act resulting in the merger and a modern, streamlined regulatory regime will have benefits to the public through the assurance that CPAs are trained, licensed, and regulated by the accounting profession to use accounting, auditing, and assurance standards published by Chartered

Professional Accountants of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also provides protection to the consumer in that they can feel assured that accountants are qualified to provide a service in their designated specialty. The provisions are supported by the CPA transitional steering committee representing the three existing accounting bodies in Saskatchewan. The main provisions of the bill, Mr. Speaker, are as follows.

Establishing CPA Saskatchewan as a corporation and providing for the transition of CAs, CMAs, and CGAs, as registrants of CPA Sask. Next, setting out bylaw-making abilities. Approval of bylaws will coincide with the proclamation of the Act.

Providing for the registration and licensing of both members and firms. Firms will be granted a licence to provide audit and assurance services where one or more members of a firm meet the requirements for licensing. Licensing requirements will be prescribed through regulatory bylaws. All rights currently available to members will be retained.

Reserving the practice of professional accounting to licensed CPAs. This means that only licensed CPAs will be able to issue audit, review, and other reports on financial statements, attesting that they are in accordance with CPA Canada standards.

Mr. Speaker, the rationale is that only CPAs are trained and regulated to perform work in accordance with CPA Canada standards. The public can be assured that service is based on rigorous standards from licensed and regulated professional accountants. Mr. Speaker, this will help to also protect the consumers that rely on accountants. By employing a CPA, the consumer can feel comforted that they are working with a qualified specialist.

I should also mention that main provisions, Mr. Speaker, also include protecting the use of the CPA designation and the use of the title professional accountant for CPAs; setting fines to protect title designations to not more than 5,000, 10,000, and \$20,000 for a first, second, and subsequent offence; providing for fines in disciplinary matters of up to \$50,000 to allow the CPAs the ability to levy an appropriate fine.

Mr. Speaker, the bill contains transitional provisions to effect the merger. For example CPAs will be required to use their legacy designations — that is, CA, CMA, and CGA — in tandem with the new CPA designation for a period of 10 years after the Act comes into force. This was identified as a critical aspect of the unification proposal that was agreed upon by the CA, CGA, and CMA members in Saskatchewan. With the repeal of the existing Acts, Mr. Speaker, consequential amendments in the bill will ensure references to these Acts and to CA, CMA, and CGA designations in other legislation and regulations are replaced by new references under this proposed Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Act will not be proclaimed until the regulatory bylaws have been approved. Work is under way with the CPA steering committee to ensure the regulatory bylaws are available for approval on a timely basis.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to, on behalf of the official opposition, certainly participate in the debate around Bill 112.

I think it's important to note that from our perspective that we obviously know that many of the firms that were indicated by the Act or involved by the Act did have some consultation with us as the opposition. I understood that they also consulted with the government. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the people of Saskatchewan that this is exactly the approach that we in the opposition want to take when it comes to the growth of Saskatchewan overall.

Where there's opportunity and where there's good collaboration, where there's good co-operation and where there's good information that's involving a number of agencies or boards, and in this case professions, when we talk about the future of Saskatchewan, we in the opposition want to see that kind of effort undertaken. And there's no question from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, that we see Bill 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*, which is quite frankly a very simple approach, in combining all the skills, combining all the value of each of the different three bodies in the province into one body that is going to be, as the minister alluded to, robust, competitive, and competent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you look at the chartered accountants themselves. And over time, some of my involvement in government and certainly in opposition, is there were many occasions when we were in government where we would go sit with a number of accountants in the different boards that were out there and the different folks that were involved with the accounting profession. And, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really, really important is that these professional people gave us invaluable advice on a number of fronts. And I can remember meeting with a number of these organizations at the Hotel Saskatchewan, in which we talked about some of the challenges that the province had, some of the issues that the province had to deal with and, Mr. Speaker, we also sought their advice on how we spend our money wisely.

So there's no question whether you're a certified general accountant or whether you're a chartered accountant or whether you're a certified management accountant, these organizations and these groups have contributed a great deal to our province, not only in the past, but certainly I relish their role in the future because these are professional people, professional people that have contributed a great deal to the business community but have also contributed a great deal to the province when it comes to advising the province on how best to spend their resources and how best to position the province overall to ensure good, solid, intelligent growth for many, many years to come.

So, Mr. Speaker, at the first blush at this particular bill, we in the opposition certainly applaud the efforts of the folks that are

involved in this profession by coming forward and sharing the information, not only with the government but with the official opposition. And I often maintained to a number of groups and organizations out there that a well-informed opposition is just as effective as a well-informed government.

And here, Mr. Speaker, is a very good point raised by the accounting profession in the province where they, again being very smart people, went to both the government and the opposition and said, look this is what we think is a great idea. We think it's going to make Saskatchewan a better place to do business. And certainly from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition always relish that role that certain organizations and professional people bring to the Assembly, and in this case the accountants. We encouraged other organizations to follow the lead of the accountants and come to the Assembly, come to the official opposition and share with us some of your dreams and aspirations on how we can make Saskatchewan a better and stronger province. And the accountants done this, Mr. Speaker.

And that's one of the reasons why I would like to read into the record the letter that was given to the government and certainly to the opposition. And the purpose of reading this letter, Mr. Speaker, is to give credit where credit is due — to give it to the leaders within the accounting industry that on many occasions gave us when we were in government some very good advice and gave us some very sound, strategic advice, which, you know, on many, many occasions we took. Now here they are once again, Mr. Speaker, coming to the Assembly with some very sound, wise investment, some very sound strategies. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that the history of the accountants, whether it involves any one of the three organizations that the minister alluded to, that they indeed have given some sound advice over the years, and that's advice that we ought to take.

[14:45]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to read for the record this particular letter, and it's, again, a letter from the three organizations that are impacted by this particular bill. And the bill is dated November 7th, 2013:

Subject: Unification Legislation Introduced in the Saskatchewan Legislature

Dear Member:

The CPA Saskatchewan Joint Venture is pleased to announce that the provincial legislation to formalize the unification of the three accounting bodies in Saskatchewan was introduced today in the Saskatchewan Legislature. The legislation, *The Accounting Profession Act*, outlines the standards that will define CPA Saskatchewan as a professional self-governing body.

Keri Ziegler, CA, CEO of the CPA Saskatchewan Joint Venture, noted that the new unified body will benefit the public by eliminating confusion over the qualifications of the different designations for accountants and by improving the standards of the profession.

“Through this unification initiative, we have brought

together the best qualities of each of the different predecessor organizations. Our members will benefit from the best of all three worlds,” said Ms. Ziegler.

An essential component of the unification agreement is a transitional measure known as tagging. Future graduates of the new CPA certification program will simply use the title “CPA” after their names. However, current members of the predecessor associations will distinguish their different qualifications by using “CPA, CA,” “CPA, CMA” or “CPA, CGA.” The tagging will be mandatory for 10 years; after that point, use of legacy designations will be optional.

Ms. Ziegler thanked officials in the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Justice for their assistance in bringing the legislation forward.

“Many people have invested a great deal of time and effort to bring unification to fruition. I want to thank everyone involved, both in the organizations and in government, for all their hard work and dedication.”

A number of other steps must still be taken before the unification is officially completed. Until the bill is enacted and comes into force in Saskatchewan, the three existing accounting bodies will continue to cooperate fully with the competent authorities to ensure a smooth transition to the new organization. Until the new CPA legislation in Saskatchewan is enacted, CA, CMA and CGA members are required to use their current designations without the tagging.

Unification of the accounting profession continues to progress across the rest of Canada. Recently CGA Manitoba and CGA Ontario announced that they are joining the discussions. Now all 40 of the accounting bodies in Canada are either unified or participating in talks to unite under Chartered Professional Accountants.

We will continue to keep you updated as things progress, and will be posting information as it becomes available to our websites.

Regards,

Rick Peddle, FCA  
ICAS President

Gayle Holman, FCMA  
CMA SK President

Mike Lawton, CGA  
CGA SK President

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I think is really important is from the industry perspective, they have forwarded that particular letter to their stakeholders. And I think it's important for Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan and the business community and the corporate sector and certainly the CBO [community-based organization] sector and the municipal sector, the list goes on and on and on, so those organizations that will be impacted on a positive note, Mr. Speaker, by the unification effort of this particular industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's important is that again, from my perspective, having these discussions with the accountants and their proposal, their idea, their thrust, their intelligence, I think it's really important for the people of Saskatchewan to know that the opposition themselves are saying, thanks so much. Thanks so much for the updates. That makes a world of difference when you have an intelligent approach to a problem that we think we can fix together by engaging the opposition.

Now one of the things that we ought to know is that as we go through the legislation, this bill being proposed today, we have the opportunity as the opposition to look at the bill closely, to work with the industry impacted, to seek advice from some of the other organizations that may have some questions, to talk to the municipal sector, to talk to the business people, to talk to a number of agencies that may have some good ideas which they want to raise, Mr. Speaker.

So I think overall, you look at the immediate reaction of the opposition. We think that this is a great first step. It's a great idea. It comes from intelligent sources. And what is best for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to embrace those that come forward with some good unification efforts to provide some intelligent services and make sure that Saskatchewan benefits from for years and years to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important, what's important, Mr. Speaker, is that this is also part of the smart-growth strategy that we in the NDP talk about. By making sure that we position, make sure that we position our industries that can make a significant difference, that could provide some intelligent direction that we engage in, and we listen to them, Mr. Speaker. And that we listen to them. Because after all, that's the reason why we're in this Assembly, is to ensure that we listen to people and bring forward and support positive change.

Now our new leader, Mr. Speaker, has talked about making sure we do the right thing, making sure we do the common sense thing. And when the government comes forward with things that make sense, Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to give our support to the particular effort and to do research to make sure that there is no hidden surprises by the Sask Party government.

That's one of the reasons why at the outset we say, this is a great idea. So we want to learn more. We want to be supportive. And we want to tell the accountants, bravo. We want to tell all the organizations, good for you for bringing forward this kind of legislation and these kinds of ideas to ensure that your industry can function 100 per cent, to ensure that Saskatchewan is well served.

And the words again, Mr. Speaker, that I'll echo, I think are really, really important, is to make the industry, the accounting industry, robust, competitive, and competent. I think those are three words I think absolutely everybody understands. And, Mr. Speaker, from the opposition perspective, we think this certainly ties in with our vision for smart growth in Saskatchewan, something that we think that we ought to support and certainly are favourably looking at supporting, this Bill No. 112.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I look at the 4,400 members and there is, I would say, no question in our mind that as these services

become more and more available, there's more and more industries and businesses that are going to need these services.

So when you see three solid groups working together to make their services to industry, to companies, and to a number of CBOs and to different organizations become more streamlined, more competitive, more robust, more competent, then who wins, Mr. Speaker? Who wins? The people of Saskatchewan. Who wins are the accountants that have brought this idea forward. And who wins overall is the future of our province, the younger generation, when some of these positive developments happen and it strengthens our province for many, many years. That's who the benefit would be felt by, Mr. Speaker. And it's certainly something that we in the opposition would support.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that when I talk about the history of the accountants and the letter that they've sent to each of their members, the general direction and thrust of what they're trying to do within this particular bill, that there is a lot of good, common sense concepts and approaches with this particular bill. And we want to take our hat off to the three organizations that are impacted.

Now we want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that this particular government does not make a mess of things because we obviously applaud this particular effort. And again from the opposition's perspective, we're going to be having more and more discussions with different groups that may be impacted, seeking their advice. It's nothing . . . I don't think we're too alarmed with what the thrust of the bill is, but we certainly want to seek advice. And, Mr. Speaker, in this particular business as MLAs, seeking more advice, getting more input, Mr. Speaker, is not a major problem nor is it an impediment to the process.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply allowing us the time to tell the public, the people of Saskatchewan that on this particular bill the concept is fairly clear. Industry supports it. The industry that it's impacted, the accountants, they put in all their three organizations into one organization. And their idea is to make sure that the people understand their services, they have the same qualification, and it ends confusion. It may end duplication. It may end a lot of other problems.

And from our perspective as the opposition, I think supporting this particular bill wouldn't be problematic. But, Mr. Speaker, as in any bill, we want to take the time to read it, to talk to a few of the impacted parties, to continue liaising, being co-operative and connected to the accountants. These are some of the things that we want to continue to do over the next couple of months. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, our initial response is that this particular bill is positive. We accept the advice and direction of the accountants overall, and I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 112.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.



**Bill No. 99 — *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again in the legislature today to move second reading of Bill No. 99, *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013*.

Mr. Speaker, the public employees pension plan is a defined contribution pension plan administered by the Public Employees Pension Board. The plan provides a means of saving for retirement to its membership. That membership may include the employees of executive government, members of the Legislative Assembly, Crown Corporations, as well as a variety of government agencies.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, as of March 31 of 2013 there were close to 53,000 plan holders of PEPP [public employees pension plan], P-E-P-P, with \$5.6 billion in plan assets. I should also mention that this number also includes 79 different employers.

Member and employer contributions are calculated as a percentage of the member's total gross regular earnings. Unless otherwise specified in an agreement, the contribution percentage is five per cent by the member, and member contributions are made by payroll deduction. Contributions to PEPP are tax deductible up to a maximum set by the *Income Tax Act* of Canada. Members do not pay taxes on contributions or the accumulated investment income until they withdraw an amount from the plan. Contributions are forwarded to the plan and are used to purchase units in the PEPP investment option of the member's choice.

Mr. Speaker, PEPP offers members the choice of six asset allocation funds, and they are: accelerated growth fund, growth fund, balanced fund, moderate fund, conservative fund, PEPP steps fund. Members may invest in the short-term bond fund either in addition to or instead of investing in one of the six asset allocation funds.

Mr. Speaker, the world is always changing. Therefore investment options are also always changing. It is desirable, Mr. Speaker, to amend *The Public Employees Pension Plan Act* to do the following: clarify that a simple majority of board members is required for all decisions made by the board; allow the board to undertake short-term borrowing for the purposes of the administration of *The Public Employees Pension Plan Act*; allow the Lieutenant Governor, by order in council, to designate the default fund into which all member contributions shall be deposited unless otherwise directed by the member; provide that the Lieutenant Governor may order that members who have never chosen a fund for their PEPP funds be moved into the default fund; and authorize the Lieutenant Governor by regulation to permit the plan to receive members and funds from a registered pension plan wanting to become part of the PEPP and to state which specialty funds members transferring into PEPP are eligible for.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013*.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Finance has moved second reading of Bill No. 99, *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm very pleased to stand up today to give our initial comments on Bill 99, *The Public Employees Pension Plan Act*, Mr. Speaker.

And just to give the folks back home a bit of perspective, what typically happens in the fall sitting is the government itself . . . Because I understand there's a couple of students that are watching, as they take an interest in this particular Assembly, Mr. Speaker, which is great to see. But there's an opportunity for us to . . . As the government brings forward legislation or new bills, some of the things that they want to do differently, they do it in the fall sitting. And what typically happens is that as the opposition, we give the first comments or the first thoughts on any bill that the government has forward. And it certainly gives us the opportunity over the next several months to research the bill and to talk to different folks that may be impacted by the bill and to of course bring forward some of those arguments at the next sitting, which is the spring sitting of 2014.

[15:00]

So right now, the first few months of the fall sitting, we're looking at the bills. We're looking at the Throne Speech that they presented and we're also doing question period and we're also doing a number of other business in the fall sitting. But clearly they intended the fall sittings to hear what the government's plans are when it comes to bills in particular and to see which groups that are going to be impacted and what the impact might be, and to take the time, the two or three months, to research and to talk to different stakeholders to see if the bill has any alarms or any problems that is created to them.

So I think quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, when we look at Bill 99 as the minister alluded to and very briefly explained what PEPP is all about . . . And PEPP, of course, is P-E-P-P. It's the public employees pension plan, and what it is is that, as the minister alluded to, is different members of the government belong to this public employees pension plan. They contribute a certain amount. The government contributes a certain amount. And they put these two amounts together, and of course the PEPP plan investment amount and that of course forms the basis of some of the employees over time that wish to retire, that they're able to do so with some adequate income.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many organizations, many corporations that do have these pension plans in place, and the province of Saskatchewan, through their employees, do have this pension plan in place. And as we pointed out on a number of occasions, this bill is about workers in our province who do have a public pension plan. We think that's something that we should continue doing to protect the worker, Mr. Speaker, to protect the worker to make sure that as they contribute a great number of their time and many times their health, and many times their precious time away from their family, that when they do retire, when they do leave the public service, that they have an adequate savings, or in this case an adequate pension

plan to help them in their retiring years.

So this is what PEPP is all about. And what the minister's talking about today is some of the changes to PEPP which I think are fairly significant. You know, we talk about borrowing money for operations. Like what does that all entail? He's talking about bringing new members into the PEPP plan. Who are some of those target groups? Like where is PEPP now in terms of bringing new members on board? Are they permitted or are they limited bringing some of these new members that the minister spoke about? These are some of the things that we have to find out as the opposition.

One of the things that we need to always remind people of that are out there, and I know there are many people work for government over time. Highways workers, health care workers, Mr. Speaker, forest fire protection workers, FPWs — all these groups, organizations, they've worked many, many years. They put a lot of time on the line and, Mr. Speaker, after the years and years of service, we need to make sure that they have that adequate retirement income as I mentioned because they're saving; they're saving and the government of course is managing.

But what they need to find out is we need to make sure that this government is listening to those working people, the working people that are saving their money for their retirement. Even if you're 24 or 23, when you start off at a young age of course it's better. But even as you begin to look at retirement, if you're 50, 55 years old, you're looking at working for another 10 years, you have to know what is being planned within this bill, Bill 99. We need to know, and let people out there know, that *The Public Employees Pension Plan Act*, there are some changes being proposed in this particular bill. How is that going to impact you? How is that going to affect the pension plan that you're currently maybe developing or maybe accessing now? Those are some of the impacts that we need to know, Mr. Speaker.

And I always maintain that there's some very, very smart people out there that monitor what activity occurs under the pension plan Act. Now I see obviously, Mr. Speaker, that there are some significant changes. And we're not ringing in the alarm bells from the opposition's perspective when it comes to the initial information that we have received from this minister and from this government. But, Mr. Speaker, as the opposition, we worry every day that there is a hidden agenda by that particular government.

And when it comes to trying to protect the public service, their record is abysmal, Mr. Speaker. They have fired workers. They have done their very best to walk away from the public sector, the working man and woman. And, Mr. Speaker, when we have that kind of activity on one hand and then we see them meddling in the public employees pension plan, we begin to wonder, what is the objective? What's going on here? And that's the reason, that is the reason, Mr. Speaker, that we sit in the Assembly and we monitor what the government is trying to do.

And many times, even though they state at the outset that this is what their Act is trying to do, what this bill is trying to do, many times you feel, and we see, that this government does

something totally opposite and arbitrarily and at the expense of working men and women of this particular problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to see this government respect and to listen to the working people more and more and a lot better. That is one of the fundamental things that we say in opposition — when you don't consult with people and you do your own agenda, put your own bills in place, people out there will be angry. And the thing that we want to avoid, as the official opposition, is to let the government do what they wish. And we need to expose what their plans are, what some of these bills are going to impact, and we need people engaged to give us advice and direction.

And I go back to my earlier statement in that a well-informed opposition is just as effective as a well-informed government, because in this Assembly we will certainly challenge the government and hold them to account because they have stubbornly dismissed a lot of issues and concerns that many working people have made to the government over the past seven years that they've been in power.

So one of the things I think is really important is that we want to continue seeing supports towards the working people. That if large corporations and business can have a profit then we believe, on this side, that the working men and women that helped develop the industry, that helped develop this province, should also have a profit called a pension plan. Nothing wrong with that concept, Mr. Speaker. It's all about smart growth. And the thing that's important is that when we look at the pension plan per se, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that this government is listening to the people that they're impacting.

And on this bill when we see, as I mentioned earlier, when we see the ability for PEPP to borrow money, when we see the ability to bring in new members, we begin to ask questions like, how much money's required? What is the money for? Who are these new members? And the list goes on. And you know, as the minister spoke about some of the other provisions that the Lieutenant Governor has the ability to do, which is primarily government, then we need to pay attention to some of those issues that the minister made reference to in his opening statement.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're also seeing in Saskatchewan that people are doing their part. There are many people as you look throughout the province, they are doing their part. We see a lot of folks, young and old, that they're working harder and they're working longer and they wish to continue to contribute to our provincial economy, and that's a good thing. And that's exactly our point in the opposition — that if the people are doing their part, if they're working harder, they're working longer, and they're working as they get older, then that is primarily a good message to government is to make sure that you respect that effort, that you don't try and pull a fast one, so to speak, when it comes to those people's pension plans, Mr. Speaker. I always maintain that you've got to watch how the Saskatchewan Party government treats the working men and women, because so far their record has not been good, Mr. Speaker.

Now one of the things that we talk about when we talk about the government listening, when we talk about the public pension plan and how employees and governments are saving

together, when we talk about the people doing their part, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about trying to understand what this particular government is up to on this particular bill and taking the time to understand what the impacts are, Mr. Speaker, it'll be a great thing to bring up, expanding the CPP, the Canada Pension Plan, Mr. Speaker.

As you know we have a provincial plan, and of course you've got the national plan where people are all contributing to the Canada Pension Plan. And when one retires, having the income not only from your old age security but having it from your CPP and of course from your public pension plan, we can see a lot of folks out there that could benefit if it's properly developed and if it's properly funded.

Now we haven't spoke about how the mix, how the mix could occur between those particular incomes. Because I know a lot of the older people in my particular riding, and a lot of them, I feel kind of sensitive to some of their issues because they talk about affordability. There are a lot of people in northern Saskatchewan, older people that have reached the age of 65, and they get about 11 or \$1,200 a month. Many of them are living in their own homes, Mr. Speaker, and that's all the money that they have. And then maybe perhaps if their spouse is still with them, then they get a spousal amount as well.

But generally many of the older people back home live on fixed income with very little supports from CPP and very little support from a pension plan because many of them did not work when they were younger. They had to care for their family or they lived off the land or they didn't ever work for government. They worked for private contractors. Whatever the case may be, as they hit 65, many of these older people simply have X amount of dollars to live on each month, and many times that amount is 11 or \$1,300 a month, Mr. Speaker.

And a lot of people out there simply don't understand. How could many of the elders in the North live on that kind of fixed income? It's because when they were younger, nobody talked to them about a pension plan. Nobody talked to them about the value of saving some of your assets or your earnings over a longer period of time to give you a better income when you got to age 65, Mr. Speaker. A lot of them didn't have that opportunity. A lot of them needed to learn about those opportunities. But more so, a lot of them were busy raising their family and many of them were living off the land to raise their family. And as they retired and got older, they are finding out that sometimes that fixed income is not enough to make ends meet.

So whether it is heating your home or whether it's buying groceries or paying the power bill or helping your grandson or your granddaughter with clothes, we understand and we hear the fact that many elders are having a difficult time, a very difficult time on surviving on 1,100 or \$1,300 a month. And many of them have that problem, Mr. Speaker. Let us not fool ourselves. Many of them have that particular problem.

And that's why, on this side of the Assembly, the NDP talk about redesigning and re-engaging a CPP component to making sure that many people in our communities aren't suffering like having that low income base. Many of them are suffering now, and we need to find ways and means in which we can position

those older people to be able to enjoy the latter part of their lives comfortably well. And, Mr. Speaker, a lot of them don't do that today.

So when I talk to young people, when I talk to young people about their future I always tell them, look, make sure you're safe at work. Make sure you're making a good salary, but also make sure that you're aware of their pension plans and their benefits, what's in place for you as a working person to ensure that you're able to save for the future. So I tell a lot of young people if they're working for any of the mine sites or the forestry companies or they're working for a private contractor or for government, it's important that they look after that, Mr. Speaker. Have those discussions because if you're 24 years old or 20 years old and you're starting your career, then you've got to know that in 45 years, you know, you're going to have to retire.

And you can't survive in this day and age on 11 or \$1,300 a month. And we see many of our elders struggling so much. And let us learn off those struggles to make sure that we properly manage our finances when we're young so we're able to plan for retirement. Even at the age of 20 years old, you've got to plan for your retirement because many of our elders didn't have that opportunity, weren't aware of it or were not given the opportunity, and today now you see how many of our elders are struggling to make ends meet. And that struggle that they're having, that the younger people ought to learn from that and start saving for their future, either through a pension plan and either through some improvements made to CPP. And the list goes on as to what options may exist, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important that under the public employees pension plan, that all the changes announced in Bill 99, that we take the time again — the several months that is required — to be able to understand what is being proposed. I do not trust the Sask Party government when it comes to protecting the public employees of this province one bit, Mr. Speaker. I do not trust them one bit.

However what I do trust, Mr. Speaker, are the PEPP administrators. I think the PEPP administrators and the board they have here — they have the board that they have in place — the employees and the management and the board, I think they're doing a wonderful job, Mr. Speaker. I think they have a track record that many private investment firms envy. I think that they have . . . The return on some of their investments are remarkable. And the loss, I remember in '08 they had a loss. I think they had a minimal loss even though it was dramatic for some people. That they're able to minimize that loss based on their management and their experience and certainly their ability as a team, those are some of the things I would point out to people.

We trust the PEPP administrative team, the board, the staff, and the management. We trust that they're making good investments, and we trust them to do the things that they've been doing over the past to make sure that the rate of return for all their investors has been remarkably high. And their performance has been good. It's been consistent, Mr. Speaker. Their approach has been professional. They've been on time and on target and above target.

[15:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we learned within the NDP is that if an organization is doing well, you do not interfere with the process. And that's why if some of the changes being presented here by the government is intended to complement that effort by the PEPP team, then of course we in the opposition would want to know that, would want to make sure of that before we move forward with some of the changes being designed and being presented by the right wing across the aisle here, Mr. Speaker.

So that's one of the reasons why, when it comes to bills of this sort, that the opposition takes the time to talk to the stakeholders and do what they can to strengthen our hand when we sit in the Assembly and hold that government to account. And this is the reason why we ask organizations to meet with the opposition — or stakeholders or people in general to meet with the opposition — and bring forward some of your concerns on this bill or any other bill for that fact. And one of the things that I think that's one of the great opportunities in the province is the democracy and the freedom for people that come forward and voice their single opinion on any bill being presented by the government, whether it's provincial, territorial, or federal.

So, Mr. Speaker, again I'll point out, there's so many moving parts to the pension plan. There are so many players. There are so many opportunities, so many challenges. It's just an amazing matrix of opportunity when it comes to planning for your old age. And we've got to pay attention to these things. You've got to pay solid attention to them. And on many occasions I find that there isn't that attention afforded to some of these changes being made by the government. And that's one of the challenges we have in opposition is to make sure we tell people that we're able to help, that we're able to do some of the work that is necessary if you afford us the time and the information and the intelligence to argue back on some of the changes being made.

Again some of the challenges we have on this particular bill all go back to what the minister alluded to earlier — inviting new members, borrowing money, some of the changes being made to the Assembly. We need to make certain that those changes aren't contradicting the good work being done by the PEPP management team.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, we will take the time, we will invite stakeholders, and we will hold this government to account on any bill they bring forward. That's their job as the official opposition. So on that note I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 99.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 99, *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Bill No. 98 — *The Child Care Act, 2013/Loi de 2013 sur les garderies d'enfants***

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill No. 98, the child care amendment Act, 2013. This amendment will repeal *The Child Care Act* which is currently English only and replace it with bilingual legislation.

These amendments came about as a result of requests from the Conseil des écoles francsaskoises, CEF, and the Association des parents francsaskois, AFP, for *The Child Care Act* to made available in French in order to ensure the requirements outlined in the Act could be understood and interpreted correctly by French language child care providers and their professional organizations. These organizations noted that the legislation outlines direction related to children's health and safety. Direction is referred to on a daily basis by the child care sector, and they are supportive of the amendment. Having the Act available in French is important for the six francophone child care centres that are presently operating within the province and for all future French language child care centres and francophone families.

There are no substantial changes to the Act as a result of the bilingual translation, but some minor changes were made that are housekeeping in nature: first, removal of alphabetical listing from interpretation; secondly, removal of previously repealed sections; third, legal modernization of language; four, reorganization of sections for clarity; five, references to department change to ministry; six, section on inspections and investigations split to provide legal clarity and, in addition, allows the investigations section to include search of vehicles.

These legislative changes will also require bilingual amendments to *The Child Care Regulations, 2001*. It is anticipated that the bilingual regulations would be made available after the Act is passed and will coincide with the proclamation of the Act. This change will meet the needs of francophone child care providers in our province as well as those who will choose to offer francophone child care in the future. It will ensure the requirements can be easily understood, available, and remove any issues with translation.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 98, an Act to promote the growth and development of children and to support the provision of child care services.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The Minister of Education has moved that Bill No. 98, *The Child Care Act, 2013* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm very pleased to be able to stand today to talk about Bill 98. And of course *The Child Care Act, 2013*, Bill 98, our interpretation at the outset, Mr. Speaker, just basically indicating from this particular government that this bill replaces old legislation and gives the government more powers to do investigation into all offences — likely meaning people running

their own unlicensed daycares, Mr. Speaker — to talk about providing a French interpretation, and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker.

So we want to make sure that when it comes to child care, Mr. Speaker, we think that child care is one of the pivotal pieces in Saskatchewan's brave new economy in the sense of building a lasting economy for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, for a number of years, is that you've got to provide the proper measure of support to working families that are out there. We know, we know and every person in this province knows that providing safe, affordable child care for working men and women is a crucial component to good, solid growth for many, many years, not only for our economy, Mr. Speaker, but for our family and this flourishing industry of providing care for children in the province.

So when you look at some of the bill itself where they talk about trying to penalize those that might be operating an unlicensed daycare, Mr. Speaker, there's no question from the opposition's perspective that we want to make sure that those that may be operating an unlicensed daycare would . . . Uncertified workers and perhaps in places that shouldn't have children in care, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we don't tolerate any of those activities. From the opposition perspective, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, we want to have safe, affordable daycare or child care that is being administered by highly proficient boards and highly trained personnel, Mr. Speaker. That is the objectives and standards that the opposition, the NDP, have in mind, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about child care.

We know in child care, Mr. Speaker, that you've got to have the spaces. You've got to have the spaces, and you've got to have those supports to working men and women that are able to drive forward the economy for many, many years if they don't have to worry about having their child in good care of a licensed, safe, certified daycare, Mr. Speaker.

So when you talk about *The Child Care Act* of 2013, Mr. Speaker, there's no question from the NDP perspective that we should never have, we should never tolerate anybody operating illegal daycares. Because, you know, if they're not supervised properly, if they're not certified, and certainly if people are not going there to do visits, inspections, to make sure that we have the proper supports in place, Mr. Speaker, the proper supports in place, then that person or that organization should not operate a child care centre, Mr. Speaker.

So from our perspective, we want to make sure that we point out that this is something that we should not tolerate as a province. And the opposition perspective, we do not tolerate those that may operate illegal child care operations, especially those that are run by uncertified workers, and those that may have challenges to their fire codes or challenges to their facilities of this sort.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know, as I mentioned at the outset, when we see the bill come forward by the minister talking about child care spaces, you know — and the bill itself, 98, it doesn't talk, Bill 98 doesn't talk about putting more resources into child care, Mr. Speaker — what does this particular government do, Mr. Speaker? It talks about penalizing unlicensed child care

spaces, or child care operation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we on the NDP side clearly see that there is a need for more child care spaces. We see that as clear as day, Mr. Speaker. Now what happens is this government is not matching the need for more child care spaces. Instead of talking about commitments towards child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, they're talking about penalizing unlicensed daycare operations. Now who is going to argue with that? You shouldn't have an unlicensed daycare operation for the issues I raised earlier. You should not be allowing anybody to operate an unlicensed daycare service, Mr. Speaker. They should not be allowing that at all.

So that being said, Mr. Speaker, the only initiative that this particular government has brought forward when it comes to child care supports, Mr. Speaker, is the proclamation of this particular bill saying that if anybody operates an illegal daycare, we are able to prosecute them. And that's it. Nothing else from the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker.

So our argument from the NDP perspective, we agree, as our leader indicated, where it makes sense, we ought to agree with the government if they're doing things right. If something makes sense with the people of Saskatchewan, we are going to agree, is what the current leader has indicated. It is common sense. It's good for the people of Saskatchewan.

So it comes to unlicensed daycare centre, I want the government to hear me. We agree that we should not have people operating illegal daycare centres, especially those that are using uncertified care workers, especially those that may be putting children at risk as a result of a faulty space or even a facility that doesn't meet proper regulations and inspections. So that said, Mr. Speaker, that's our position on unlicensed daycares. They should not be tolerated. They're running risks, and they're a problem to the system.

Now let's shift gears, Mr. Speaker. Let's shift gears to the argument about more child care spaces. Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the members opposite as they begin to heckle a little bit over here. The problem we have and, as I've said it time and time again, under the smart growth strategy that the NDP have in place, there are many, many components to our smart growth strategy, Mr. Speaker. The three or four pillars that we talk about when we talk about environmental protection, when we talk about worker protection, when we talk about inviting investment, Mr. Speaker, those are pillars of what the NDP smart growth strategy is. And that we should protect the economic well-being and social well-being of the province of Saskatchewan at all costs, Mr. Speaker, that is primarily in our minds when we talk about smart growth.

But a big part of the smart growth is how you offer supports to the working men and women. A pension plan is a darned good start, Mr. Speaker, but they're meddling in that. Protection at the workplace is a really good start, Mr. Speaker. Well they're meddling on that too as well, Mr. Speaker. To be able to bring . . . engaged industry, to engage with different unions and making them collaborate and cooperate on the future growth of Saskatchewan, well they're dividing the people, Mr. Speaker.

So a lot of the things that we speak about when we talk about

the smart growth, one of the components is how do you support the working men and women, Mr. Speaker. And I mentioned pension plan. I mentioned safe workplaces, and I mentioned good, solid pay. Those are things that people in Saskatchewan understand.

But a big component of our smart growth strategy, Mr. Speaker, is also affording supports to the working men and women. Things like affordable homes, that makes sense, Mr. Speaker, where you have a young couple with two or three children or one or two children, where they want to own their own home. Well the Saskatchewan Party has not realized that's a major problem for many young working men and women. There are many young families that'll never have that Canadian dream of owning their own homes because the house prices have gone through the roof and are unreachable or just too high in terms of a price to pay for many of these young families. But does the Saskatchewan Party care about that? No they don't, Mr. Speaker. They care about their rich friends and insiders, not the many working men and women that are out there.

[15:30]

The other challenge that a young couple has, Mr. Speaker, is child care. When you look at them wanting to go to work, the mom and the dad, the partners wanting to go to work, and they have a child that they have to care for, or a couple of children. Some of them may go to school. Some may be in daycare. You look at what options you afford these families, these young families that are starting off.

Child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, they have not done enough when it comes to child care spaces in this province, full stop, period. They have not done enough to help young men and women that are trying to get their first home, to help them afford their first home. They have not done enough for that, Mr. Speaker.

Despite all the back-patting that they do, they have failed miserably in helping young couples trying to get their first home and helping young couples with child care spaces — which they're willing to pay, which they are willing to pay as long as it's a good, affordable price, Mr. Speaker — to allow them to go to work, allow them to continue training, allow them to continue building this economy knowing that their child is in a safe place, a nurturing place, Mr. Speaker, and an affordable place. And the Sask Party has failed miserably on that front when it comes to trying to help Canadians, Saskatchewan families finally own their own home and having them be given the opportunity for affordable and safe child care options, Mr. Speaker.

So I look at this bill, Bill 98. Nothing there. One or two pages, and all they talk about is penalizing those that are operating illegal daycare spaces. Well, Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying, nobody should be operating an unlicensed daycare. Nobody should be looking after children with uncertified workers. Nobody should be operating a daycare where there is some faulty facilities that they're using. That's all common sense things that people in Saskatchewan understand, and they certainly do not support that kind of activity when it comes to child care spaces.

So that being said, we've got the bill off the way. Now we're waiting as the opposition to see, okay what have they got coming forward for child care? Well, Mr. Speaker, just stone-deaf silence from that side, Mr. Speaker. There's no activity. There's no action on child care, the affordability of child care.

And that again, from our perspective in the opposition, we say to the people of Saskatchewan, once again the Saskatchewan Party has disappointed us. And once again they have failed. Despite given the booming economy, growing population, money in the bank, they have failed Saskatchewan families that are working harder and trying harder. They continue dismissing families that are telling them these are the issues that are important to us. And yet the Sask Party continues to back-pat themselves and not pay attention to the people out there that have real issues on affordability of good, licensed daycare. That is the issue.

It's not penalizing unlicensed daycare centres, you should do that anyway. That should be a gimme, a slam dunk. That's what it's all about. But instead of making this big bill, their main announcement when it comes to childcare is they're going to go after unlicensed daycare. Well, Mr. Speaker, if there's an unlicensed daycare operation, shut it down.

But from our side, we're totally unimpressed with how the Sask Party has been trying to change the channel, trying to divert people's attention away from the real issue, which is helping families buy homes, helping families with affordable, safe daycare needs, Mr. Speaker. And that is a crying shame, despite all the money and all the booming economy and the growing population that they inherited from the previous NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

So again, I will go on this particular bill, that once again — once again — the Sask Party is using spin and PR [public relations] and bills like Bill 98, you know, just to try and change the channel. The fact of the matter is you haven't done a darn thing for child care spaces. You haven't done a darn thing to help young families afford new homes, Mr. Speaker. You haven't done a darn thing to help people, to help working families instead of you just simply back-patting yourself. What you're doing now is you're selling off the Crowns, and you're now bringing in private schools where people can't even access, Mr. Speaker.

And that goes to another point. Under their P3 [public-private partnership] models, Mr. Speaker, under their P3 model scenario are childcare spaces going to be allowed in that school? I think there's a lot of value behind our argument under the community schools concept where you actually have community groups that are using the facility in the evening, you have childcare spaces in that school.

Under the P3 model, when they're hiring their corporate buddies to build our schools and to privatize our schools, the P3 partners will own those schools. They will control access to those schools. Under the P3 model are they allowing things like childcare spaces to be integrated with the design of that school, Mr. Speaker? Good question. And I bet you, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of consideration on their part has not been taken into account when they sit down with their corporate partners in developing

these P3 models.

So these are some of the questions we need to ask when we talk about accountability and transparency under the P3 model that the Sask Party is trying to push. They are pushing privately owned schools that limit access to the community that it's supposed to serve. And that severely limits the school's ability to become a community school and to do innovative approaches like allowing childcare spaces within that school.

Mr. Speaker, the community schools concept is a great concept. It allows many, many aspects of the challenging life of a young student to be incorporated in that school, to support that student so they stay in school. And, Mr. Speaker, once again we see how the Sask Party has stubbornly refused . . . They're unwilling to learn and to listen now to the people of Saskatchewan. What their mantra is, is we're going to go private. We're going to privatize Information Services Corporation. We're going to privatize our schools. And you know what's going to happen is we'll get to announce those schools today. But guess what? Future generations will pay for it. And guess what? Somebody else will control access to it. But the main thing is to get the announcement today.

And, Mr. Speaker, again, on this particular bill, Bill 98, *The Child Care Act*, I wonder if they incorporated some of the child care needs that we spoke about here into some of the new P3 partnerships. I would like to see that particular aspect become very, very clear when it comes to their P3 mantra. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the people of Saskatchewan, they have not taken any of those, any of those into account.

So again I point out that this particular bill, Bill 98, *The Child Care Act*, is rife with problems that they don't want to talk about. They've identified one problem, dealing with unlicensed daycare spaces, and that's it. That's as far as the bill goes. It doesn't talk about the demand for more child care spaces. It doesn't talk about the challenges of young families in buying their home and getting their own home. It doesn't talk about the challenges of child care for some young mothers and young fathers that are trying to go to work to build this economy even stronger. It doesn't talk about any of those issues, Mr. Speaker, not any of those issues. It talks about a negative, and none of the positive.

And that's exactly why, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are getting tired of this old Sask Party government. They're seven years old, and their age is starting to show on them, Mr. Speaker. They have no innovation. They're stubborn. They only listen to their friends. And they ignore what the many families in Saskatchewan have asked them not to ignore, and that is meeting some of the needs of these young families that are coming here to make Saskatchewan their first home, and those that have lived here for many, many years want to have their first home. So together I think those two partners — the people that moved to Saskatchewan and those that have lived here for many years — can indeed build a brave new, bold province.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, dealing with the unlicensed daycare centres, we need to do that. Dealing with the child care spaces in Saskatchewan, the Sask Party gets a big fat F from the opposition. A big fat F on being able to deliver. A big fat F on

helping young families own their own home, Mr. Speaker, and a big fat F of not having the innovation nor excitement to build a lasting economy in the province, an economy that helps the rich as well as the poor, to help the urban as well as the rural, to help the immigrant as well as the native Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That is what I think smart growth is all about from the NDP perspective.

And right now Bill 98 doesn't touch any of those issues at all, Mr. Speaker. But rest assured, over the next couple of months we're going to have a lot more to say about child care spaces. We're going to have a lot more to say about this government's failings to the young families of our province. We have a lot more to say about that, Mr. Speaker. So on that note I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 98.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 98, *The Child Care Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That's carried.

**Bill No. 100 — *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013***

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

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*. This bill amends the existing assessment management agency Act to ensure the agency is properly funded to provide its services to the municipal and education sectors.

Saskatchewan's property tax system raises revenues based on taxable property assessments. The annual property taxes generated from the assessment system, which was \$1.52 billion in 2012, are an important funding source, consisting of \$929 million for municipalities and \$595 million for the education system.

Consultations occurred with the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency to ensure the amendments meet the needs of the agency and provide it the flexibility to raise required revenues. Further feedback from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] indicated that there are no objections in consideration of this bill.

Changes in the bill include: first, repeal provisions relating to the 65/35 per cent split sharing of SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency] funding responsibility between the province and municipalities, since this prevents the agency from seeking greater funding from the municipal sector.

Second, to make related financial amendments that provide SAMA greater flexibility respecting increases to municipal requisitions, provide timelines that are achievable and ensure a properly funded agency, and make it more administratively efficient for government to make its financial payment to

SAMA earlier.

Third, to make miscellaneous amendments of a non-financial nature. These better reflect the agency's present roles, responsibilities, and practices, and respond to the changing responsibilities of the ministries of Government Relations and Education respecting the education funding system.

Mr. Speaker, government has a direct interest in the delivery of property assessment services in a timely, accurate, professional, and consistent way, and in ensuring public confidence in the property assessment and taxation system. The ability to do property reinspections, to update assessments, and to conduct annual maintenance inspections to add new properties to the assessment roll are affected by the level of funding to SAMA.

School divisions and municipalities both end up forgoing increased property taxes from assessments which are not up to date. This could also end up directly costing the provincial government more for grants to school divisions. The potential financial benefits for SAMA's client municipalities and the education sector of up-to-date property assessments, achieved through annual maintenance inspections and reinspections of municipalities, could be significant.

In 2012 property tax revenues were split, with 61 per cent going to municipalities and 39 per cent to education. Mr. Speaker, the amendments related to funding will provide for a fairer balance of financial responsibility for assessment services to municipalities and the province. These financial amendments will be made retroactive to January 1st, 2014 to correspond to SAMA's fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that municipal SAMA requisitions have been stable for over 10 years. Municipalities are the main beneficiary of the property tax system, and revenue-sharing funding has seen significant increases in funding for municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, provincial interests in SAMA and property assessment are outlined in the Act. The province will continue to provide funding for the assessment system. Government increased SAMA's operational funding for the 2013-14 fiscal year by \$522,000. The actual amount of provincial funding to SAMA will continue to be determined in the provincial budget process. And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The Minister of Government Relations has moved that Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

[15:45]

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I am very pleased to be able to stand today and to provide our initial look at Bill 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act*, which primarily deals with SAMA.

And for a lot of folks out there that might not know what SAMA does, it assesses properties throughout the province. It is a fairly complicated way of determining how your land taxes

are being set. There are a number of different players. Of course as you know, there's the business community that pay land taxes. There are the private residences in the cities that pay land taxes. There are small homes in some of the smaller communities that pay taxes. And the RMs [rural municipality] have varying degrees of property classes out there. So to be able to assess your property taxes is a fairly complex and complicated task throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

So who's been the leader in that particular regard? It hasn't been so much government or some of the municipal players. Really it's been the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency which has primarily been in existence for a number of years. So one of the things that obviously that this particular bill, from what I can gather, Mr. Speaker, is that it really clarifies a lot of the language when we're dealing with SAMA. And it also talks, as the minister alluded to, looking at the funding needs that are required to operate SAMA efficiently. It also removes some of the school divisions from assessments, and so on and so forth.

So there is, any time you have changes to a very complicated and very, very tough role to play when you look at assessing taxes, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of impacts you've got to be very careful on. A lot of people in the province, you know, they look at their tax bill on a regular basis. And the tax bill varies, as I mentioned, from place to place, from property to property. And we have to make sure that some of the changes in this very complicated matrix of assessing property values and thereby assessing taxes, Mr. Speaker, you have to be very, very careful when you undertake that particular role.

Now we can understand that there's some value here in a sense that if you want to be able to do the assessment so you're not seeing certain classes of property or certain homeowners or certain property owners paying really high tax prices . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Why is the member on her feet?

**Ms. Wilson:** — Leave for extended introductions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatchewan Rivers has requested leave to make an extended introduction of guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to take a moment to welcome some guests seated in your gallery. It's a rather large group, so I won't have the opportunity to name everyone. But I want to say a big thank you to all of you for being here. We really appreciate it.

The group joining us today includes members from the Saskatchewan Breast Cancer Connect, SBCC. It's a newly incorporated organization to help patients, health care practitioners, and breast cancer related support groups.



Recognizing the existing efforts within our province to fight breast cancer, SBCC will help patients become knowledgeable about cancer and its treatment.

From this group we have Deb Koptie — can you give a wave please as I say your name — Anthea Fritz, Andrea Soby, Colleen Kot, Jan Derwores, Nancy Hordern, Diana Ermel.

Also joining this group today are Pam Frigon and Garry Frigon from Lisa B Originals. They manufacture custom breast prosthetics for Saskatchewan residents who have undergone breast cancer surgery.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to welcome Jordana Buchan, Debbie Hagel, Tammy Chamberlin, Gail Garden, and Heidi Clay. These ladies are all breast cancer survivors and I have no doubt that they act as an inspiration and support system to many currently battling breast cancer and their families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank all these individuals, and of course the other guests joining them here today, for their efforts and for their support they offer countless individuals in their fight against breast cancer. So I would like everyone today to please welcome them to their Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

**Mr. McCall:** — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank the member from Saskatchewan Rivers for that, that great introduction. On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to welcome everybody from Saskatchewan Breast Cancer Connect here to your Legislative Assembly.

In terms of the work of advocacy that you're doing alongside the very demanding work of surviving and taking care of your own health and working with your family to see yourselves through these challenging times, that you've met that challenge and have moved beyond that to advocating, not just for your own situation but for others as well, is pretty remarkable.

And I just want to remark on that. On behalf of the official opposition, we look forward to the meeting that we'll have later today. I believe our health care critic will be in attendance at the presentation of the petition and the further work of advocacy that will be going on. But as you all well know in the gallery, and as many of us in this Chamber know, cancer affects in so many different ways. And that this is the response that you as individuals and as families and as community have mustered in the face of this cancer is inspiring, to say the least. So please keep up the great work, and we look forward to meeting with you very soon this afternoon. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from

Athabasca.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill No. 100 — *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013* (continued)

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome those that are fighting to bring more awareness to the breast cancer challenge in our province. And as tough and difficult that the work is that you're undertaking, it still makes the world a better place for many, many survivors and families that have lost loved ones. So please continue on with your fine work.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the Bill 100, I think what's really important is that, as you look at the myriad of challenges when it comes to assessing property taxes throughout the province, we need to make sure that some of the impact and the decisions made are clearly understood by as many stakeholders as possible. There are many organizations that are impacted when we assess property taxes overall. Like I mentioned at the outset, there are the homeowners, there are the property owners, there are the business owners, there are the corporate interests — all these different players out there need to have some very good information and relevant information in front of them to determine how the impacts and some of the changes of this particular bill will impact their business or their family or their bottom line.

Now what I think what's happening, Mr. Speaker, is that people are doing their part. We see that people throughout the province are working hard. They're working very hard to save up for their first home, something that many people still say is not achievable for young families because the price of houses have gone through the roof. And as I mentioned earlier, young people are having difficult time, a very difficult time in trying to buy their first home. And young families are struggling, Mr. Speaker.

And when we look at the affordability of homes for young families, one of the first things that come up of course when you go to see a bank and you talk about a mortgage is of course your principal, your interest, and your taxes. They're the PIT. Those are some of the things that the banks look at. And they start looking at the cost of buying your own home, your first down payment. They also incorporate the taxes, exactly how much of the taxes are you responsible as a new homeowner. And if you start seeing the taxes going high for some of the property owners, it becomes even more unaffordable for young families. So we see, Mr. Speaker, that young families are trying harder.

You look at the challenges of daycare, child care spaces for their children as being one of the problems that I mentioned earlier and then you start talking about affordability of homes and then you talk about the taxation on top of that — that all impacts families throughout the province of Saskatchewan. And that's why, as the official opposition, we take a great interest. We take a great interest when this government comes along and talks about reassessing how properties are being taxed, Mr. Speaker.

When they talk about SAMA, the agency that looks after the assessment process, SAMA over the years has done a pretty good job, Mr. Speaker. They have been out there and trying to alleviate some of the strain on certain property classes. And they have been trying to work with SUMA and SARM and the different agencies out there. But as I mentioned at the outset, when you start tinkering with SAMA and start tinkering with the property tax process, Mr. Speaker, there is some significant problems when you add to the myriad of challenges that SAMA has in trying to make sure that you properly tax people and fairly tax people when it comes to their property.

So we see there's no question in our mind that one of the biggest challenges of young families is affordability of a home. And having property taxes that are unfairly placed on that new home or existing home that they're buying is going to be a deterrent for young families. So we take a special interest in this particular bill to ensure that property taxes don't negatively affect young families from buying their first home.

Now, Mr. Speaker, history will tell us and it will teach us that throughout the early years that many young families were able to start buying their own homes at 40 or 50,000; some even less than that in the earlier years. Now that was affordable for many young, young families that were starting off owning their homes, say 30, 40, 50 years ago, where families were able to set up in a city, buy a home for 20 or 30 or 40,000 and then begin to raise their family and to begin to build a life. They also understood that property taxes were also affordable at that time. But today that reality is young families, for a starter home that's in half-decent shape, half-decent shape, all of a sudden it's 3 or 400,000, Mr. Speaker. And that's an incredible challenge for many young families that may not have the help from their parents or may not have the income. Their opportunity to own their own home is becoming farther and farther out of their reach. And that's a crying shame that we're not putting Saskatchewan people first, Mr. Speaker.

So when you look at that affordability issue, what you don't want to do is you don't want to complicate that opportunity that a young family may have in owning their own home by putting in an unfair tax system in place where they're paying more taxes than their neighbour, and paying more taxes than other parts of a particular community or city. So it's important that we look at all options when it comes to taxation and property taxes, Mr. Speaker, because it does have an effect on young families that may want to buy their first homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's also important is that you assess the value of certain homes. I'm not sure how the system works, and this is why we need to take the time to understand this bill, but I'm not sure how the system works between what a bank may assess the value of that home versus how SAMA might assess that value of that home. Is there collaboration between the two values, Mr. Speaker?

Because the bank could easily tell you, based on their banking information, this house may be less valued than what SAMA would value it at. So the bank says your home is only worth 300,000, but SAMA says, well we think your house is worth 400,000. Well which appraised value do they use when they assess your taxes? Well that extra \$100,000 difference could make a significant, could create a significant problem for a

young family.

So that's my whole point when you start talking about SAMA and how you're looking at property tax hikes every year or two years, how you're evaluating your property, how you're incorporating some of the challenges that the young people may have when they're trying to buy their own home.

When we do things in government, when we try and look at ways and means in which we could strengthen Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we on the NDP side of the Assembly say that we ought to do something significant for young families in the province. Whether there have been families that have been living here for 50 or 100 years or new families that joined the growth of our province, that we need to position them and position them well when it comes to owning their first home. And every initiative that we have, Mr. Speaker, should be focused on that particular point.

And we are not doing enough. Everything from unaffordable child care spaces where the mom and dad can't go to work, unaffordable housing prices where the family can't afford to buy their first home, and they're crammed into an apartment, Mr. Speaker. And then we talk about taxation, what this particular bill is talking about, Bill 100. We need to incorporate that thinking more and more into how we could smartly grow this province for many, many years to come.

And that's why, on this side of the Assembly, we talk about smart growth, Mr. Speaker. We need to incorporate any challenge, any challenge or any omission of effort, any omission of effort into trying to recognize the challenge that young families have when it comes to property, and that the taxation of that property, we need to address it and assess it. And that's why, from our perspective, when our leader stands up and says, if the government is doing something correct, and it's common sense, it's going to help the province of Saskatchewan, we will support it. But if this government is doing things not properly or not thinking things through, which you find evidence of this on a continual basis, then we need to stand up with the people of the province and tell them that what they're doing is wrong, and we need to inform the public as much as we can, through the venues of the Assembly, to explain to the people why they're doing things wrongly.

[16:00]

And from our perspective, everything from daycare spaces being not existing to the unaffordable homes for young families and the taxation of those homes, Mr. Speaker, it all has a residual effect on young families that get discouraged and may never have the opportunity of owning their own home. So taxation, property taxes are a huge, huge challenge for them as well because every time you make a mortgage payment, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, there's principal, interest, and taxes — principal, interest, and taxes. And taxes have a significant . . . A significant part of that particular mortgage payment each month is due to property taxes.

So when you have bills that come along and talk about assessments, when you have bills of this sort, Bill 100, that talks about property tax hikes, the impacts on SAMA, how SAMA is funded, all of these, all of these are interconnected

and certainly from our perspective need to have a lot of discussions.

So I tell the people that are out there today that may be watching the Assembly — there's probably not a lot, Mr. Speaker, but the people that are out there today — that any, any effort, any effort that is going to impact negatively on assessing your property, we need to know as the official opposition. Our job is to hold the government to account on some the things that they've failed to do, Mr. Speaker. Our job in opposition, as our new leader indicated, is to applaud the government on some of the initiatives that they might be doing properly but with some improvements can do better. And what we're finding evidence of, Mr. Speaker, instead of this government taking initiatives that we've developed over the years as an outgoing government, what they have done is instead of trying to improve the programs, they've cancelled some of those programs that talk about the values of such things as home ownership, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to talk briefly about the taxation system in the North, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about the taxation system up in the North, that we are treated much the same as the rest of the province, which is good. Nobody's arguing that the North needs special treatment or a special deal. The North wants to hold their own. You look at our economy overall, through our mining sector, our forestry sector, and oil and gas sector, the tourism sector, the North is really holding their own.

Now when it comes to property taxes, Mr. Speaker, and paying those property taxes, or paying some of the property taxes on some of the leased land in and around our northern communities, Mr. Speaker, that all goes to a central fund called the northern revenue sharing trust account. And you look at all the taxes collected over the years. And today you ask the question, is some of those taxes, are they of benefit to the northern communities? Do we have decent roads? The answer is no. Do we have decent schools? The answer is no. Do we have some post-secondary training? The answer is no. Do we have some critical shortages in housing? The answer is no. So our argument is we're paying our property taxes, and we're paying a lot of taxes out of the North. Why aren't we getting the benefits? And that's one of the reasons why I think from SAMA's perspective, we have to find out. We have to know from the northern perspective, so as northern MLAs we can tell the people, we can tell the people, yes, we are getting our benefits from taxation, the taxation that we pay on our homes or from our rec properties, Mr. Speaker.

So these are things that affect far and wide some of the challenges that young families have, not just in our big cities, but the small towns and villages and of course the northern communities as well. So I think there is, as I mentioned at the outset, SAMA has a wide-reaching impact. They're not just impacting a few people. They are impacting a great number of folks, including young families.

So we've got to be very careful. When this government meddles in certain organizations that are intended to be fair and proper and to be ethical in how they develop tax laws and of course tax properties . . . or tax on properties, we have to make sure we pay special attention to these bills to be very careful that this particular government is not trying to pull a fast one, as they

say, by sneaking in some of their right wing agendas to some of these bills that may at the outset appear to be benign, so to speak, Mr. Speaker, but clearly, clearly that there might be some ulterior motive that we want to find out about, Mr. Speaker.

Now again from our perspective, we want the people of Saskatchewan to tell them that we want to be transparent on this bill and every other bill that this government brings forward. We need to know who it's impacting and who they are impacting, Mr. Speaker. We need to know who they consulted. We need to know whether they're listening to that advice because we find out, Mr. Speaker, that when a government says consultation, consultation doesn't necessarily constitute agreement, Mr. Speaker. When the government gets up and says, well we've consulted with this group, well we find out a few weeks after they consulted with the group that the group told them, no way do we support that particular initiative. So consultation is a lot different from agreement, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why you'll never hear any member on that side of the Assembly say, we have an agreement with them. Instead the buzzword they use, oh, we consulted them. What they don't admit, Mr. Speaker, when they say, we consulted them, they should include this last phrase in some of their statements. We consulted them. They didn't like it worth a heck, but we don't care. That's what they should say over there. And that, Mr. Speaker, is one of the fundamental problems that we find in the province, is that this government has stubbornly refused to listen to people. They don't take into account the fact that people are doing more, and they're finding . . . we're finding that this particular boom and the enjoyment we all have, there are many, many, many people being left out. And there are many organizations being left out and many sectors and many regions being left out, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why as an opposition we're paying very close attention to all their bills, to all their bills. And this SAMA bill talks about taxation and how they're going to fund SAMA. They're going to talk about all the different ways that they're going to . . . It cleans up the language, they say. Well, Mr. Speaker, any time the Sask Party meddles with language to an agency that by and large has been doing a decent job, and that's SAMA, then we in the opposition pay very close attention to what they're doing. And so far, Mr. Speaker, they're not addressing the real issues when it comes to affordability of homes and taxation of those new homes.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would point out again that people are doing their part. There's no question that they're working harder, they're working smarter, and there's many, many more people working. And we applaud that effort by those people. We applaud the agricultural base that has generated great revenues for this province, not just this year, but many years to come. The corporations, the oil and gas companies, we want to see them continue coming to Saskatchewan and building this province. We've had a great history, Mr. Speaker. The oil and gas industry have had a great history in the province. We want to see that economy continue building.

And this particular opposition will address every threat to that economy as best we can. And when we see a confused government bring forward legislation that is not properly vetted

through the public, that is not dynamic enough to ensure that growth goes for many, many years, and is not properly consulted with the impacted organizations and groups, then we as an opposition will stand up and we will fight back for those people that do not have a voice in that government or this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. That is our role and we relish that role.

So, Mr. Speaker, you look at some of the issues attached to taxation, land taxation. I've talked about the affordability of new homes. I've talked about the cost of living. I spoke about the cost of rentals, Mr. Speaker. I spoke about buying your first home and ensuring that everyone benefits from the boom that Saskatchewan's enjoying. Those are certainly common sense approaches that I think people in Saskatchewan will applaud.

I think the people of Saskatchewan are very generous people. They'll simply say, look, if we're all enjoying the boom and everything's going great, then we need to strategically invest some of the dollars we have to make sure everybody benefits — young and old, rich and poor, the healthy and not so healthy, the North, the South, the East, the West, the cities, the urban parts of the province. We need to all benefit from this largesse that we enjoy as a province. And what we're finding, Mr. Speaker, is that there are only a few, a few of the chosen friends of the Sask Party that actually benefit overall from the great boom that they're having. And there are many, many groups, many groups that are being left behind.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look at Bill 100, and we want to tell the people of Saskatchewan one thing. You've got a couple of more months to address these bills and to consult people on these bills. And what the opposition will not do is turn around say, well we consulted with them and that consultation was good enough. We want their agreement that some of these problems addressed in these bills are problematic to their organization or to them.

So those people out there in Saskatchewanland, if you have the opportunity to participate in this democratic process, then I would suggest you join us online and participate in assessing this particular bill, Bill 100 or any other bill that this government brings forward, and see how it may impact you and your property tax. See how it impacts, whether it's a good impact or a bad impact. We need to know those things. And we have a couple of months, and that's one of the reasons why as an opposition we use the venue of the Assembly to clearly tell people in the province that our solution is not simply consultation but our objective is agreement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we afford time to debate this bill. And we'll begin the research process that is required for this particular bill, and the outreach to the different organizations and groups and communities will begin as a result of this fall sitting. So on that note, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act*.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To ask for leave of the Assembly to move a motion regarding the order dated November 7, 2013.

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to move a motion. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

## MOTIONS

### Rescinding of Order for Bill No. 605

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been discussion between the parties and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the order dated November 7, 2013 for second reading and committal to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies of Bill No. 605, *The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act* be rescinded; and further, that the said bill be placed on the order paper under private members' public bills and orders, adjourned debates.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That the order dated November the 7th, 2013 for second reading and committal to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, Bill No. 605, *The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act* be rescinded; and further, that the said bill be placed on the order paper under private members' bills and orders, adjourned debates.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? All in favour say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — All opposed say nay. The motion is carried unanimously.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill No. 111 — *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*. Mr. Speaker, the intent of this legislation is to improve accountability and better inform residents and families about personal care home inspection results. The Ministry of Health is responsible for licensing and monitoring personal care homes to ensure that the residents receive safe and appropriate

care in a safe and appropriate environment.

Mr. Speaker, our government strives to improve the quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. Increased transparency will assist people when selecting a personal care home for themselves or their loved one. It will also provide increased incentive for personal care home operators to provide the best possible care.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is anticipated to pass in as early as the spring session in 2014. Should that be the case, Mr. Speaker, it would allow inspection information to be posted on the Ministry of Health website later in 2014. Mr. Speaker, the legislation responds to recommendations from both the Provincial Auditor and the Provincial Ombudsman that there should be more information about personal care homes available to the public. Inspection reports will indicate where homes need to make improvements to meet required standards and help people make informed choices.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note that personal care homes are privately owned and operated and are not the same as long-term care facilities commonly referred to as nursing homes or special care homes, which are part of the publicly funded health system. There is sometimes confusion around the two, so I mention this to point out the difference.

Mr. Speaker, with that I am pleased to move second reading of *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*. Thank you.

[16:15]

**The Speaker:** — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to, on behalf of the official opposition, be the first member to respond to this particular bill, Bill 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act*.

And, Mr. Speaker, the main point of this particular bill for those people that may be watching is personal care home inspections are to be made public. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we want to say that's the thrust of this particular bill is that this government is not addressing the chronically low staffing levels in our health care system.

Now I noticed the minister spoke a bit about the fact that these are not government-owned facilities; these are private care home facilities. But, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility to ensure that the elders are properly taken care of — the older people in our province, the pioneers of our province — it is absolutely everybody's responsibility. They can't simply slough it off on the fact that this is a private care home, that really the government has no role in it. I think if the government is putting any money into these private care homes, if anybody is putting any money into these private care homes, then they have a responsibility to ensure that these private care homes are providing the adequate service to our elders and to the people that are living in these homes, the senior citizens of our province.

And that is something that we've noticed over the last couple of years, that this government is getting worse and worse at caring for the seniors. Our leader has been bringing up on a continual basis where health care workers are coming forward, a retired nurse coming forward and saying, we've seen some of the activity. We've seen some of the challenges of not only within the health care system, but in some of these private care homes where seniors are being left unattended for hours on end, Mr. Speaker. and it's primarily because of understaffing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we within the NDP don't want to ever see, don't want to tolerate nor do we ever want to see any effort to warehouse senior citizens in this province. That would be a shame and that would be a black mark on the history of the province of Saskatchewan if we ever saw that kind of attitude or that kind of practice ever occur in our province, Mr. Speaker. Because many of us, as we all know, we're going to be the ears and eyes of some of the groups and organizations out there that are crying foul over some of the treatment. And we're telling the government today, we're telling the government today that it is primarily as a result of your understaffing where the problems exist.

And the minister, through Bill 111, is bringing home, is bringing forward *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act*, which is basically saying that the home inspections of these care homes are to be made public. Well, Mr. Speaker, one would assume and one can easily assume that the records of the performance of these care homes should be public. It probably is public. All he had to do is just go online and maybe check out each personal care home to see their record or maybe talk to the families or research that particular facility. And so this whole notion of Bill 111, when we talk about the personal care homes, the major thrust is simply saying, we will make public the personal care home inspections.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP on this side of the Assembly are saying there should be a lot more effort on this front, a lot more. And what is causing the challenges, Mr. Speaker, within these personal care homes is the fact that the staffing levels are dangerously low. They're dangerously low to a point where we've brought case after case in this Assembly to explain to the government.

In this day, where you have unprecedented revenues coming into your coffers, where you have a booming economy that you inherited, where you've had a growing population, should we not commit adequate resources to our senior citizens, to our elders, to those that are living in these homes to ensure that they're able to live in these homes in dignity, Mr. Speaker? Is that a very tough thing to ask this government? Is that a difficult thing to ask this government to do?

When we hear how many . . . the horror stories of some of our seniors being left without proper care for a number of days, of calls being unanswered — calls for help, Mr. Speaker — of some of the care homes not being properly cleaned nor maintained, Mr. Speaker, and the only response we have from this, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that they're going to do their, allow the inspection records to be made public.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not what the opposition has been asking for. I don't think it's what the people of Saskatchewan

would want for their senior citizens. They want to see action on the home care front. And we see that this government has failed miserably when it comes to trying to take care of the seniors in these care homes where the problems are persisting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to, and I do this from the perspective of a press release, you know, where the press release quite frankly indicates that, and I quote . . . Cam Broten of the Saskatchewan NDP indicates, "Government seniors-care review does not address biggest problem." So, Mr. Speaker, the press release that our leader issued in reference to the care home challenges are very, very clear and concise in this press release. The leader has indicated that there are problems, persistent problems that this government, it ignores and does not address.

Now what we would point out is the personal care home inspections to be made public under Bill 111. Mr. Speaker, I go back again pointing out that we have been telling the government day after day here that it is chronically, the chronic low level of staffing in some of these care homes is what the problem is. You're allowing seniors to go unattended for a number of hours. We are asking them to look into the matter, as opposed to simply responding by saying, oh we're putting the inspections online now. That's not what the people of Saskatchewan asked. It's not what the NDP asked for. We asked for some concrete action.

They turn around and say, well we're going to now be putting \$10 million into the problem. Well, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in Saskatchewan don't know that \$10 million is a one-time fund, one-time fund. Once that's expended, Mr. Speaker, then guess what? There's no more money after that.

So they may be able to fix a boat ramp or a ramp to go into a seniors' home, an accessibility ramp. They may be able to fix a bathroom, Mr. Speaker. But it still does not address, it still does not address, still does not address the challenges of staffing, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the things that's important, Mr. Speaker, is that when you look at these issues overall, that \$10-million-dollar fund will be expended. And it will not result in any improvement to service nor will it result in any more staffing at these care homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the challenges that we would remind the member or the government overall is that there are seniors that are sometimes sitting in washrooms for hours on end. They're pushing call buttons with no answers, Mr. Speaker. Families are coming to these homes and asking, how bad can it get before the families are forced to do something, Mr. Speaker?

And these are some of the things that we always talk about on this side of the Assembly when we tell the government again, you've got . . . The common sense thing to do is to share the largesse you have, to share your money. Don't sit on it and brag about it day after day here, Mr. Speaker. Don't talk about the booming economy and the growing population, and in the meantime you're allowing seniors to be warehoused in some of these units without care or regard for them.

And that's one of the things that really upsets a lot of people in the province when they see that their grandma or grandpa or their mom and dad are being treated in such a bad fashion. It is

not something that the Government of Saskatchewan ought to ignore, Mr. Speaker. So on our side of the Assembly, given the fact that you've got the money, given the fact that you've got the resources, given the fact that you've been given the mandate, why are you failing our seniors in these care homes that are feeling the pressure of being ignored, Mr. Speaker?

And you bring some of these cases forward, as we have. You bring some of these cases forward as the NDP opposition have, and the government simply ignores them. They simply ignore the needs that the many seniors are bringing forth through their family spokespersons and, Mr. Speaker, that is a crying shame. It is a crying shame when you see that kind of reaction by the government from people within the province that have a legitimate argument and a legitimate point that their mom or dad or grandma or grandpa — whoever it may be, great aunt — that they are having some very difficult times in some of these care homes, and about the only response that the government has brought forward is simply to put in a \$10 million one-time fund and no increase in staffing levels and no minimum care standards.

That's the thing that really upsets us on this side of the Assembly, when we tell the government that you ought to have some minimum care standards for senior citizens so we know that at the very minimum they're getting a number of hours of support, a number of hours of care right in these homes, and the government steadfastly refuses to do that.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why we go back to our point, back to our point as the opposition, the fact that, the fact that understaffing is the main problem in some of these homes. Understaffing is the main problem in some of these homes. And how can the government callously disregard those points and those issues raised by the families that come to this Assembly and engage the opposition and tell them, we ought to do better as a province? You ought to do better as a government. We all have to do better when it comes to the care of our seniors.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the government of the day does not accept responsibility and simply sloughs it off and doesn't do anything to address the problem, then guess what? The vast majority of people out there are going to pick up the slack themselves, and they're going to come to the Assembly. So we would encourage them to continue coming to the Assembly and bringing forward those concerns that their loved ones are going through a lot of indignity in some of these homes. And that should never ever happen in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why from our perspective, that's why from our perspective when we have bills of this sort, it really brings home, it really brings home a lot of issues. It brings to light the fact that this government is ignoring the problems that we have persistently brought forward when they simply talk about putting online the inspections that they make at some of these facilities, and that was their solution to addressing the challenges within the private home care industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many people in our province whose story we have not heard yet. We know that. There are many, many families whose stories may never be heard. And the proper thing to do, the proper thing to do from our perspective, as we have indicated and our leader has

indicated, is you've got to set some minimum standards to ensure that people that are in these homes have the adequate time and attention from qualified staff to ensure that they're properly cared for. That's very simple, very basic, and very straightforward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to have my grandma around when she was about 96. She was a fairly old lady. And the last couple of years, she just basically laid in her hospital room in Ile-a-la-Crosse and couldn't speak to anybody. But one of the things that was most amazing, Mr. Speaker, is that the staff there treated her very well. Because as she grew up, Mr. Speaker — and that's one thing we didn't know, and it's the story of many, many other families in our province — my grandma helped raise a lot of kids in our home community, and she had 13 of her own, and she had grandkids. And she cared for a lot of people in our community, like many other grandmas and grandfathers do.

And, Mr. Speaker, when she laid in that hospital room, many people came to visit her. And some of the nurses and some of the staff in the facility came to visit her as well, and they'd watch her. They'd turn her over to make sure that she didn't . . . was comfortable. And a lot of times when you have seniors laying in beds for hours on end, they sometimes develop bed sores just from not being able to move. There's circulation problems, Mr. Speaker. And you'd see the incredible respect that they had for my grandmother because, in her early years, she done a lot for our community and she helped a lot of families.

Now in our particular family, our grandmother was the matriarch of our family. Like we'd all go visit her and we'd sit with her, and she'd tell us a lot of good stories. She was a great grandma. And we really benefited from some of the kindness that she showed. She had shown many families in her early years because families will do that. As you help one another . . . That's basically the message that I got from her is if you're not in this world to help one another, what are you here for? That was some of the messages that I got from her over time.

But I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, that the staff in our facility back home treated my grandma with great respect and she died a peaceful death one night. She died a very peaceful death. And I think the biggest thing is that she died with a lot of dignity, and she didn't suffer. In some ways, Mr. Speaker, you would think, you would think that it's just God's way of thanking her for her service.

Now what we don't want to do, Mr. Speaker, is see the day where we forget about that. We don't think that the elders in our lives . . . We as a government need to not think that the elders in our lives are a burden. They are the pioneers. They're the people that built our communities. They're the people that built our families. They're the people that built this province. And we have to understand that. We have to understand that they are the ones that got us to where we are today. They are the ones that really contributed to our province in many great ways and in many ways that we will never know or understand.

[16:30]

Now going back to my grandmother, Mr. Speaker. We learned

so many lessons from how the staff at the hospital took care of her and, you know, we saw this as we were visiting every day. And we assume, Mr. Speaker, we assume that this is the kind of treatment that every elder gets, but we were sadly mistaken. There are many elders that sometimes die a lonely death. And, Mr. Speaker, of course our prayers and thoughts go out to all the elders because you lose so much when you lose an elder. And in this day and age, that's not the thing that we ought to do as a province. If we have the resources, if we have the resources — you know, the appeal to all people as human beings — if we have the resources, then we must take the time and we must do the actions necessary to ensure that there's adequate care for our seniors in this province.

A fundamental thing, if you invest in the seniors and take care of the children well, your future is going to be bright. That's just fundamental in my beliefs, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we look at some of these issues being raised today, and I say to the government that we ought to do a lot better. And am I scolding the government? Absolutely I'm scolding the government. We ought to do better on the personal care home. We ought to do better to understand the affordability and the issues that our senior citizens face today. And we ought to have respect for all seniors — north, south, rural, urban, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the things that's really important is that you do your very best. Given the resources you have, you do your very best. And that's all that we ask of you as an official opposition.

And so far, Mr. Speaker, this government once again has got a big, fat F when it comes to taking care of our seniors in these private care homes because the job is not getting done, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how more plainly I could explain to the minister and to the government. The job is not getting done. When you don't insist on minimum standards, when you don't insist on making sure you have enough staffing levels, and when you don't insist on performance by these private care home owners, if you just simply ignore the problems happening in these homes, then you're the problem, Mr. Speaker, and it's not the seniors. It is the government not reacting and responding to a crisis that the NDP have brought forward and will continue bringing forward over the protests and howls of the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker.

So I look at this particular bill and I say to the people out there, we have a lot of work to do. We've got to move a lot of mountains here to convince the Sask Party government who have stubbornly ignored these concerns. We have to do a lot of work to make sure people out there know that seniors' care is in crisis in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We've got to know that seniors need us more than ever today. For one simple thing they ask for, for one simple thing. It's to have the proper care that in the event that they ever were to pass away, that they can pass away with one thing that they all want to pass away with, and that's dignity, Mr. Speaker, with dignity, knowing that they were treated well in their latter years. And what is wrong with that? What is wrong with that?

So not only is affordability a challenge for our elders, but the proper care and the proper resources to ensure that care, the minimum standards, the good government oversight, and the action required to make sure this problem doesn't persist, Mr. Speaker.

And when I look at Bill 111, it doesn't do any of that. It doesn't do any of that, Mr. Speaker. It just simply talks about maintenance records being made public. And I say it's a crying shame, and I say to the minister and to the government that you ought to do better given the resources that you inherited from the previous government. And so far you have failed these people of Saskatchewan. You have failed our families, and you have failed our senior citizens. And I don't want to hear any of them talking about senior care for the next number of years, Mr. Speaker, because they have failed miserably on that front by not addressing this problem, Mr. Speaker.

So again I would point out, the government is not addressing the chronically low staffing levels in these care homes. The government is not insisting on minimum standards and good conduct in these personal care homes, Mr. Speaker. Their only solution is a one-time fund needed just for fixing up a few problems here and there, a few band-aids here and there, but not addressing the main issue, and that is the short staffing that is occurring.

So once again I would tell the people of Saskatchewan, we want your stories. We want your input. We want your action on this front. And we need to force the Saskatchewan government to realize, the Saskatchewan Party government to realize the manner in which they're treating our seniors is horrible. It is horrendous. You need to start moving forward. You need to address the issue and stop ignoring the concerns being brought forward by the families through the official opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleagues have a lot more to say. I've got a lot more to say. I'd tell you about the stories that I have. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to give them adequate time to share their stories, my particular colleagues. And we're going to have the families . . . We're encouraging the families to look at this bill, Bill 111, and to see if it meets your needs and your requirements to ensure good care of your grandma or your great-aunt or your grandpa.

And you look at this bill, and about the only thing the bill does, it talks about care home inspections to be made public. So if they're made public and there are glaring problems and glaring omissions, is the government going to react to it? Well, Mr. Speaker, I can almost guarantee you, based on their past performance, the answer is a big fat no. This government will not, will not respond to the crisis. They simply want to hope that this problem goes away. But the opposition's going to make sure it's in their face every single day. You're failing our senior citizens. You're failing our families. And you're failing those that care for our senior citizens of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So on that note, I know we have a lot more to share. We're going to invite people to participate and to look very closely at this bill, not for what it's intended to do but for what it's failing to do, Mr. Speaker, what it's failing to do. So on that note, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act*.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Bill No. 101 — *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013***

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to move second reading of Bill 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. As I do, I'd also like to join colleagues from both sides of the House in recognizing our guests from the Saskatchewan Breast Cancer Connect. We appreciate your courage, your ability and capacity — unique capacity — to help champion this important cause for families and communities right across our province. And so to all of you, I know we'll have a chance to speak in a few minutes, but I want to offer my special and sincere thanks for your courage, your bravery, and your capacity to articulate in ways that is increasingly meaningful for people across our province.

Again, Mr. Speaker, as I rise today to move second reading of *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*, our government has worked diligently to demonstrate our commitment to post-secondary education and skills training. We've done that since the first day we've been elected. We continue to seek to be responsive to the needs of our post-secondary institutions while at the same time also being responsible to citizens right across the province.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm requesting that the Legislative Assembly support the following several proposed amendments. These amendments will undertake and do a number of things. First, they will help to clarify the awarding of diplomas in the list of powers of convocation, and that's under section 11.

Next, they'll help to ensure that individuals elected to represent the senate, most specifically and especially outside of student members of the senate, they will work to ensure that they represent the senate, will be graduates of the university. And this is as per section 24.

Third, the amendments will clarify the process by which student members of the senate are elected, and this is afforded action in sections 29 and 32. As well, the amendments will amend the term of office for the senate's nominees to the board to allow them to serve a three-year, a third three-year term. That is section 45.

As well, they will amend the powers of the council to facilitate the appointment of student members on hearing boards. This is section 61. And they'll address the requirements of the corporate seal. That is section 98.

Mr. Speaker, importantly the amendments that will allow a senator to serve a third three-year term will bring parity between the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the board appointments made essentially by cabinet, and those elected by the senate. These are the members of the board that are eligible to serve as board Chair or Vice-Chair, so we think it's



important that there is parity in the number of terms that these individuals can serve. Being eligible to serve three terms allows the members to gain expertise as members of board before serving as Chair or Vice-Chair, which helps the University of Saskatchewan maintain continuity and expertise in its board leadership.

The remaining amendments are what we might call routine or perhaps even housekeeping in nature.

Mr. Speaker, the University of Saskatchewan submitted a letter earlier this year to the Ministry of Advanced Education requesting these amendments to its legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Advanced Education has consulted with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina on the proposed amendments. Both institutions have provided letters of support for these amendments.

With respect to the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the ministry has worked closely with the institution on the proposed amendments through ongoing discussions via the university secretary's office. The University of Saskatchewan consulted with the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association and they have both provided letters of support for these proposed amendments.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that while many of these amendments are routine in nature, the amendment to section 45 will help the University of Saskatchewan maintain continuity and expertise in its board leadership. I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak to these amendments today. And, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Advanced Education has moved second reading of Bill No. 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm very pleased and happy to participate in the debate and of course give the initial comments on behalf of the opposition in reference to this particular bill, Bill 101. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to start off or preface on my comments with the basic statement that in the country as a whole, our U of S [University of Saskatchewan] I think has the second highest tuition of all the provinces and jurisdictions of our country — the second highest tuition rate for many of our young students.

And when we talk about some of the bills here today, it's basically, from my perspective, it talks about how they appoint their senate and their board. Mr. Speaker, there are more pressing issues in this province than worrying about how we confer board appointments. And, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that from the university perspective, I think, I think, whether it's the U or R [University of Regina] or U of S, that we ought to make a concerted effort to look at ways and means to which we can make education more affordable, as opposed to tinkering with board appointments or senate appointments, Mr. Speaker.

So I would point out, I would point out if the work of the university is so pressing by this Sask Party government, it's so important to the Sask Party government and the minister opposite, Mr. Speaker, and the minister opposite, then why is it, why is it . . . The fundamental question I have is, why does it remain the second highest tuition in the country at our university? Big question, Mr. Speaker. Why is that? The burden of debt on some of the families and the young students is going to be on their backs for years and years to come. And what great announcement did the Sask Party have today, Mr. Speaker? It's about tinkering with their board appointments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan, like I mentioned in some of the other comments, they want to see more action from this government. They want to see a great strategy on how the universities will roll out their plan for educating our young people to build this economy for the next 20 or 30 years. They don't want no tinkering. They want a major overhaul and they want excitement. And they want the government to be dynamic. They want everything to happen the good old-fashioned way through hard work, through good vision, and to some proper resources, Mr. Speaker. And we see none of that from this government, Mr. Speaker.

And again I point out — whether it's a right wing agenda to privatize our schools or to sell off the Crowns or to starve the universities, Mr. Speaker — we can't understand from this side of the Assembly how they could do so much harm with so many resources that they inherited back in 2007, Mr. Speaker. How could they not get things right despite all the good opportunities that they inherited from the previous administration and the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? That is what's totally beyond us on this side of the Assembly. How could they have messed up so many things, so often, and on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker?

[16:45]

And again the universities, the universities, Mr. Speaker, I look at the universities again. They're having a lot of challenges. We're hearing of cutbacks. We're hearing of layoffs. We're hearing about the fact that many of the students are now assuming a lot of the debt and now, Mr. Speaker, a lot more debt than the students of the past.

So again you go back to some of these points and you ask the fundamental question, one fundamental question. Why is it that the tuition rates for the university student in the province of Saskatchewan is the second highest in the country? Why is that? Why is that? And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Not a peep from the Sask Party. Because if I was them, I would be just as embarrassed to answer that question as it was posed to me, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina need our help and all the different colleges need our help and they need our help now, Mr. Speaker. And if they don't get that help, if they're being ignored, Mr. Speaker, then what you're going to find is you're going to find tinkering that's happening right now as a result of this bill and not addressing the main issue, the big issue, the fundamental issue, is why are our students paying the second highest tuition in the country of Canada? That's the question I have for the minister,

Mr. Speaker.

And there's a lot more issues I want to raise on this particular bill, but I want to point out that's the fundamental question we have. They cannot answer, Mr. Speaker. But we have a lot more people coming forward with a lot more of those points on this particular bill. So on that notion, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 101, and I take my seat, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 107 — *The Wildfire Act*

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after some brief remarks, I will be moving second reading of *The Wildfire Act*.

The primary focus of the new legislation is the prevention of wildfires, over 50 per cent which are human caused. *The Prairie and Forest Fires Act* of 1982 was developed in the 1950s and then updated in 1982. It is one of the oldest pieces of wildfire legislation in Canada and has not kept pace with current wildfire issues or policies. It is inefficient in terms of implementing key protective measures such as fire bans, and requires a complete rewrite.

Each year we are seeing greater loss of homes and businesses as a result of wildfires. The devastating impact of wildfires on communities can be seen, an example is Slave Lake in Alberta last year, resulted in a significant portion of that city destroyed by wildfire. In 2003 in Kelowna, BC [British Columbia] over 300 homes were lost. We see the devastating impacts of wildfire in California and Colorado. Saskatchewan though is not immune. In 1999 seven homes were lost in La Ronge, and in 2002 some 54 homes and cabins were lost at Turtle Lake.

In the new legislation, the first of its kind in Canada, Mr. Speaker, provisions will be included for adoption of fire prevention measures dealing with building construction and vegetation management to better improve the survivability of structures from a wildfire and create a safer area to conduct firefighting activities. These measure will only apply to any new development within the provincial forest and some designated parkland and is an important step in the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

The proposed new wildfire Act before the House will update terminology, clarify administrative responsibility, clarify responsibility for wildfire and liability for causing wildfires, and define ministry responsibility and liability. Its purpose is to provide the provincial government with legislative authority to address the prevention, management, control, and extinguishing of wildfires as well as provide the provincial government with legislative authority to create related regulations.

*The Wildfire Act* is based on the principle that risk to human life, community infrastructure, economic and social values shall be managed in careful balance with the important ecological role of wildfire in a sustainable environment. Furthermore it recognizes that the responsibility and accountability for reducing the likelihood and consequences of wildfire is appropriately shared by government with individuals, industry, Crown corporations, and municipal authorities to ensure the protection of people, property, and public assets.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Act aligns with the goals of the government's growth plan by supporting safe development of Crown forest lands. It will provide additional protection and security for industry and residents and improve the protection of infrastructure and management of the province's natural resources.

The new legislation will enable administration of industrial and commercial operations under the ministry's results-based regulatory framework. This will be done with the establishment of the wildfire prevention and preparedness code chapter. Several industry sectors such as oil and gas operations, mineral explorations, road construction, public utilities, outfitting, peat moss operations, and railway operations were not included under the old legislation but have been a cause of fires. Mr. Speaker, they are now indeed included.

As wildfire danger increases, additional prevention and preparedness measures specific to each industry sector will be triggered resulting in fewer industry-caused fires. By taking measures to protect their infrastructure from wildfire, industry will face reduced disruption by extending their duration, the duration of their operations, and can continue to operate safely when wildfires occur in the vicinity.

The legislation will require all industries, including public utilities working in the provincial forests and designated parkland, to complete fire prevention and preparedness procedures and practices that will help decrease the number, cost, and area burned by industry-caused fires.

The wild land interface is an area where structures are built close to or within the forest. As a result, the potential for wildfires does exist in this region. The wild land interface will continue to expand as continued growth and economic development initiatives take hold across northern Saskatchewan.

The significant property loss as a result of wildfires has occurred in interface areas and is expected to increase unless more proactive measures to reduce wildfire hazards are indeed instituted. In order to accomplish this, *The Wildfire Act* will enable development of a wild land interface code chapter requiring new developments of a permanent nature on land within the Crown provincial forest to conform with fire smart principles. It will incorporate fire hazard mitigation measures related to building and subdivision planning, design, construction, vegetation management, and maintenance.

The new Act also places greater emphasis on prevention and preparedness measures with respect to and of fire. For non-conformance, it places additional liability on individuals and industry for not only firefighting costs and expenses, but

also for the value of Crown timber, damages, and rehabilitation of Crown forest land, and damages to property.

This proposed wildfire Act will also enhance client service and reduce government administration by moving from a system currently requiring permits for all burning activities to a risk-based notification system. Only the highest risk activities will require permits in the future, Mr. Speaker. The remainder will require either a burn notification or no notification at all if identified as a low risk. The ministry notification process will avoid the false dispatch of costly resources.

The proposed new legislation further clarifies where rural and municipalities and the Crown are responsible for controlling and extinguishing wildfires within rural municipalities. It also provides assurance to all municipalities that the minister will determine if costs for firefighting assistance provided by the ministry constitute an excessive financial burden on a municipality.

It includes regulations to determine partial remission of costs where warranted. We listened to rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, and we retained the status quo on the 4.5 kilometre, 3-mile buffer zone adjacent to provincial Crown forests and clarified the way costs can be indeed shared.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation is fully supported by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, SARM. Since we became government, we have been working diligently to make changes to the way we regulate. We have listened to stakeholders, first to understand their perspectives on the proposed legislation, then to make appropriate adjustments that meet the needs of both stakeholders and government.

The legislation will also build on several important commitments of this government, our commitment to economic growth, and our commitment to the sustainable management and long-term health of Saskatchewan's provincial forest.

Mr. Speaker, the new Act will align our province with the legislation of other Canadian wildlife partner jurisdictions; will treat resource stakeholders consistently, including industries under the New West Partnership Agreement; and reflect the ministry's current results-based regulations initiatives. The proposed wildfire Act will support and promote the protection and management over natural resources. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Act ensures that Saskatchewan will continue to sustain a safe, healthy environment and foster economic and recreational development which is vital to our province's thriving economy.

Mr. Speaker, with that I move second reading of *The Wildfire Act*. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister for the Environment has moved second reading of Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm very pleased to be able to stand today in the Assembly to respond initially to Bill 107 on behalf of the official opposition.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot, a lot of questions on this particular bill. And we're going to take the time, Mr. Speaker, to research all the different consultations that the minister alluded to in his opening statement because we think that there are some significant challenges, not only for the RMs but for many of the villages and the towns that are along the forest fringe of our province. And we're going to take a very special attention to some of the statements that he made as a result of this particular bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know, I know that the member, the current member from . . . or the current Minister of Agriculture, and I think the Minister of Housing, and one more of the members of the government took a tour of northern Saskatchewan when they were in opposition. And you should have heard the phrases on the radio. My goodness. The let-it-burn policy, they don't care about the northern forest, they don't care about the northern people.

And guess what, Mr. Speaker? Who created the let-it-burn policy? It was the Sask Party all along. So they're letting our forests burn. And there's nothing of any value there. They're letting the forests burn, Mr. Speaker. So I remember their little trip to Fond-du-Lac and a few other northern communities where they said, oh this terrible NDP government is letting it burn. And here, Mr. Speaker, they were developing their own let-it-burn policy. So I guess my only point is, this wildfire Act, Mr. Speaker, is probably the only thing . . . The only value I see in this particular bill, it might be a good fire starter for their let-it-burn policy in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's all I see in this particular bill.

Now Mr. Speaker, what I would point out as well is that there are many people that want to participate in this bill. There are many organizations that want to have their say in this bill. And when you start sending bills to RMs and to small villages and towns that can't afford to pay a forest fire fighting cost bill, either you've made sure you're fire smart, otherwise we'll send you a big bill for this fire we're going to shut out for you . . . And industry is in the same boat, Mr. Speaker. If they accidentally start a fire, they're going to have to start paying firefighting costs.

Look at some of the Crown corporations. If some of the activity in SaskTel or SaskPower, if they create a fire, guess what's going to happen? They're going to bill SaskPower, and guess who's going to pay for it? The consumer, the people like you and I that pay our power bill. That's who's going to be paying the price if there is a fire created by any of our Crown corporations. Once again, all intended to weaken the Crown corporations of the province, Mr. Speaker.

And that's exactly what this right wing government is intending on. They don't listen to anybody. They don't consult. They do what they think is right. And Mr. Speaker, that kind of arrogant attitude will get you in trouble. So on that note, I know we have a lot more folks that want to talk on this bill, and they will. So on that point, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the debate on Bill 107.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]



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