



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

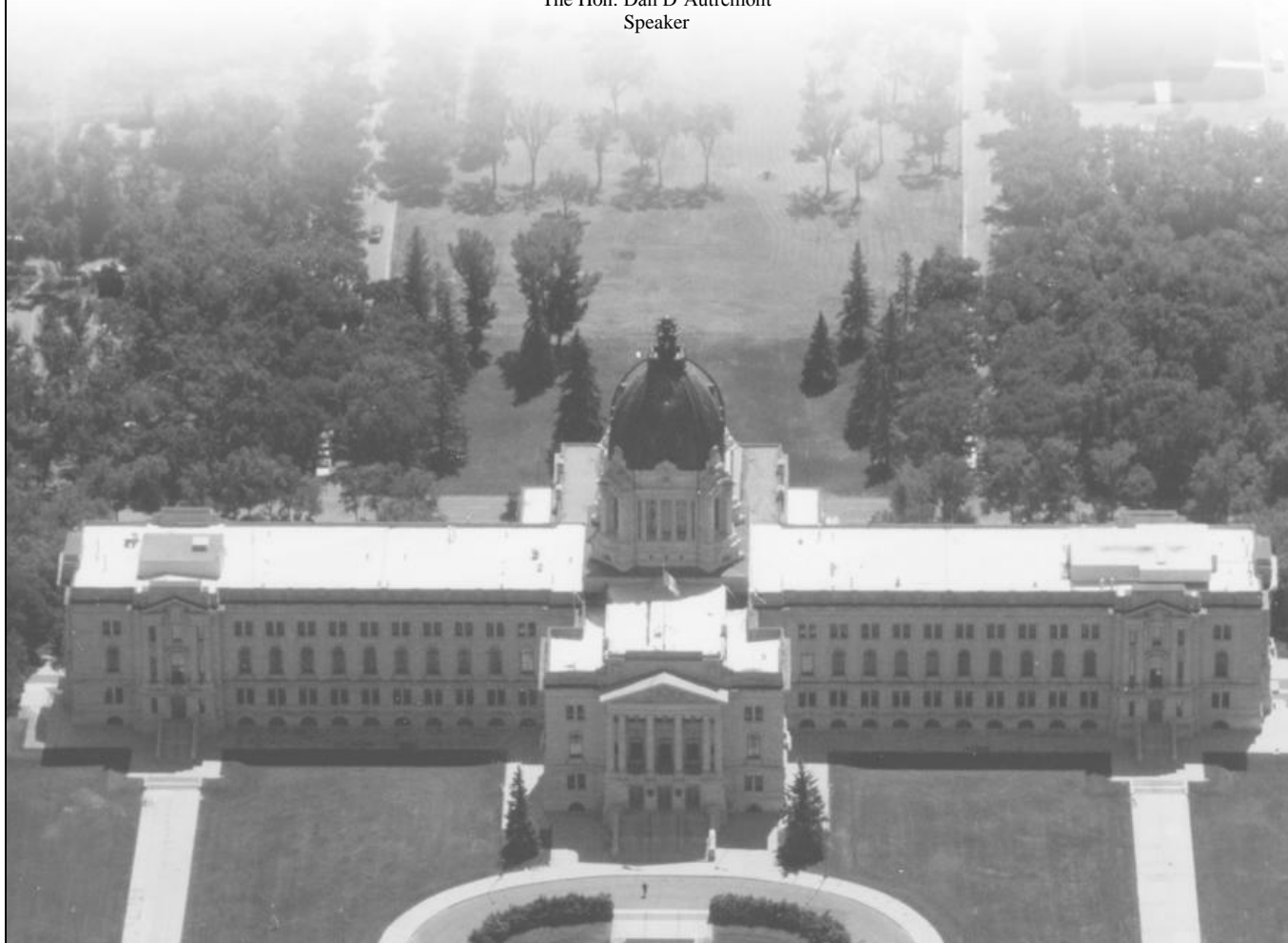
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce a group of officials, actually Ministry of Social Services officials who have joined us today. They're seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they're with child and family services unit. They do outstanding and essential work on behalf of the children of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce them to the members of the House at this time, starting with the supervisor, Darlene Walliser. Maybe they could just give us a wave as I introduce them. The assistant supervisor is Heather Yanko, and the child protection workers include Tess Charuk . . . And I hope I get these pronunciations right. Karen Wilson — I think I got that one right — Gwen Johnstone, Kerina Klassoff, Janelle Sebastian, Kim Schleede, Randi Obleman, and Lindsay Schroeder.

Mr. Speaker, these women do amazing work on behalf of vulnerable kids in the province of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the ministry. I wanted to introduce them as a way of saying thank you for that work and also I felt it was right because I photobombed their session on the stairs of the legislature and had a picture taken with them, and it was an honour for me to do so. We want to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today.

And just while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I know that members of this Assembly have met with the firefighters from across the province, and a number of them have joined us today. And I think the minister is going to more formally introduce them, from our side certainly, here in a moment. But there's one in particular I want to point out, someone I've known since we were in high school together in the 1940s. He has been a long-time professional firefighter, serving our community. He's a good friend and he raises great bison in southwest Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I want to welcome my friend Trevor Braun who's also here with the firefighters today.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I'd like to join in with the introductions that have been made, first of all to say thank you to the child protection workers from the ministry who are here today. There's perhaps no greater responsibility we have as a province, to look out for our most vulnerable. And we sincerely thank you for the work that you do on the front lines, recognizing the huge pressures that you face. And I want to say thank you for the work that you do on an ongoing basis in caring for the most vulnerable here in the province, and recognizing the huge needs that are there for resources as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Premier. He's correct. In all three galleries here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, there are professional firefighters who have joined us from cities here across the province. I want to say a special welcome to the president of the provincial association, Kirby Benning, who is in attendance. But importantly, there are . . . Importantly, in attendance is the leadership and representatives from locals throughout the province who make a stop at the legislature as part of their annual activities in order to ensure that they are doing everything they can to care for Saskatchewan communities by bringing forward concerns that demand the attention of legislators.

So I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to the firefighters for all that they do year-round to ensure that our families are safe and to ensure that our property is safe. On behalf of the official opposition, I'd welcome all these individuals to the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming Kirby Benning and members of the Saskatchewan Professional Fire Fighters Association to the legislature. They met with the Human Services Committee earlier today, and this is their annual day to come to the legislature, meet with members of the legislature. It's something that I think we've enjoyed a very positive and productive relationship with over the years. We have worked with them to make changes regarding the asbestos registry and to ensure that presumptions were included regarding Workers' Compensation Board for certain cancers.

We look forward to continuing that relationship, and we would like to not only welcome them today but would like to thank them very much for the good work that they do on an ongoing basis keeping our communities safe. They not only are the firefighters in the province but in most communities are members that are the paramedics and are often the first responders in the case of a major incident or an accident.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of the legislature, we'd like to welcome them to their Assembly today and look forward to continuing to work with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the Minister of Labour in welcoming the firefighters here to our legislature. It's really important that we recognize the good work that they do because we all want to feel safe in our homes and our communities. And they do that 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and particularly now as this province is booming and there's been so much investment in our province. So they do such good work. So let's all welcome them to their legislature. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, to you and through you I'm very pleased to introduce three very articulate, empathetic, thoughtful, inspiring, and sincere leaders from First Nations University. These student leaders are the vice-president of communications, Mr. Brad Bellegarde; vice-president of finance, Ms. Katryna Smith; and Ms. Jessica Dieter, who is events coordinator among the student leaders.

This morning we had a chance to meet. We spoke about a number of important and pressing issues. We spoke about the need for greater inclusion, including the need to continue to work on issues regarding overcoming issues of disabilities — that especially on a day like today. We spoke about issues of child care for students on campus. We also spoke about the importance of retention and student achievement. And these students have been very, very helpful in making sure that voices of students from right across the province have been heard. And we appreciate the spirit of constructive dialogue that really was present today and look forward to an ongoing discussion with these and other students. And so, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of this Assembly to join in welcoming these fine leaders at First Nations University 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 Brad Bellegarde, Katryna Smith, and Jessica Dieter from the First Nations University Students' Association to their Legislative Assembly. And the minister's taken a lot of good words to describe these people here today at their legislature, and I can confirm that all of them are quite accurate.

The only one I'd add maybe, the only description I'd add maybe, Mr. Speaker, to what the minister has already said is, in the person of Brad Bellegarde you've got somebody who's pretty handy on the microphone. And the work that he does as Brad Basic and InfoRed is a sight to behold and a sound to behold as well. And with Katryna and Jessica, you know, people that are well grounded in their community, in tradition, in culture, and not just in the past, Mr. Speaker, but carrying that forward as well. So it's really good to see these great individuals here at their Legislative Assembly. Tansi. Ta wow.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, Bill and Rob Craddock, business owners and operators of Inland Metal Manufacturing here in Saskatchewan. I'll have more to say about them in my member's statement. So please give them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and all members of this Assembly a group of 29 grade 11 and 12 students that are seated in your gallery. They come from the Cupar School. They're the history 30 class, Mr. Speaker, and I believe for

many of them this is their first time to visit the Assembly. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Murray Bruce who happens to also be the principal of the school, along with educational assistant, Mrs. Colleen Dinsmore, and their bus driver, Mr. Joe Brodner.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is the first time for some of them, but there are a couple of students in the group that have been here before, a couple of my grandchildren. Owen, if you could give us a wave. That would be Owen Hart and Tenaisha Hart. They've both been here before on other special occasions and I'd ask all members to help me welcome them to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's a tremendous honour for me to introduce someone seated in your gallery here today, a community leader here in our city, in our community, and also right across the province. He's also a fantastic hip-hop artist and his name is Curtis Adams. He also is known as Unkle Adams. That would be with a K. He's also a past student of mine. I had the privilege of teaching Curtis at some point. I did teach him math, not spelling, with unkle with a K.

And what I would like to say is that Curtis has taken his exceptional abilities, put them to use in our community as a community leader and for the greater good in an effort to end bullying in this province. And I thank him for that. And Curtis is joined as well by his parents, Dianna and Lawrence. It's a pleasure to have them in the Assembly. I ask all members to join with me in welcoming this community leader and his parents to his Assembly.

While still on my feet, certainly I'd like to welcome all of the students, all of the firefighters, but specifically a good friend and leader in this province, Brad Bellegarde. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to take a minute to welcome a former student of mine who I taught 28 years ago, from Prince Albert — one of the firefighters here, Lloyd Zwack. I want to welcome you particularly to your Assembly and I'm really glad to see that you made something of yourself. And thank you for all the work you do as a community leader and within your profession. So it's a pleasure to welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to welcome a constituent of mine seated in the west gallery, Kristin Kutarna Gates. Kristin, give us a wave.

Kristin is an enthusiastic entrepreneur as a creator, owner, and strategist behind the Chic Strategist, the go-to online coach to create intelligent, stylish business strategies for women

entrepreneurs and small-business owners.

She's an active volunteer in her community, in giving up her time and volunteer time and expertise to help non-profit organizations to grow and prosper. She's also an instructor at the U of R [University of Regina] as a strategist. She's a proud mom to her three-year-old daughter, Maiella.

Also seated with Kristin today is Leanne Persicke. Leanne works with us at the building and I would also like to welcome her back to the Assembly. Please welcome these two guests to our Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members today 21 grade 10 students, the social studies 10 class from the Melville Comprehensive High School. Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied by their teachers, Ms. Koskie, Ms. McFarlane, and Mr. Rondeau. And I'll have the opportunity to meet with them shortly after question period. I would ask all members to welcome these students and their teachers to their legislature.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition in support of anti-bullying initiatives. And we know that bullying causes serious harm and the consequences of bullying are devastating, including depression, self-harm, addictions, and suicide. And we know that this government is not doing enough to create safe places in our schools for gay and transgendered students or a student bullied because of their sexual identity. And this government must act so that students have simple, easy-to-understand information about gay-straight alliances in their schools or how to form GSAs [gay-straight alliance] and who they should talk to in order to form a GSA today. We know that bullying is a human rights issue, one of safety and inclusion. I would like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to take immediate and meaningful action to protect Saskatchewan's children from bullying because the lives of young people are at stake and this government must do more to protect our youth.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition because the leaders and residents of northern Saskatchewan are concerned about senior care in the North. The Croft report of 2009 showed a serious shortage of long-term care beds for seniors, and the problem has gotten worse. Seniors have done their part for this province, and it's time for the government to

do their part. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to treat northern Saskatchewan senior citizens with respect and dignity and to immediately invest in a new long-term care facility in the La Ronge area.

I so present.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of replacing the gym at Sacred Heart Community School. The undersigned petitioners wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly the following: that the gym at Sacred Heart Community School in north central Regina is now quite literally falling apart, has been closed indefinitely, and is no longer safe for students or staff. The petitioners are well aware that a temporary solution has been arrived at with the refurbishment of the old sanctuary at the old Sacred Heart community church, but they need a permanent solution.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that 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 out that enrolment has increased by 100-plus students over the last 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 that Sacred Heart Community School needs a gym. Mr. Speaker, in the prayer that reads as follows:

The petitioners 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from Sedley and Regina. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Support for Potash Workers

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that hundreds of potash workers in Saskatchewan are being laid off. This is incredibly concerning news for those workers and their families, especially in the lead up to Christmas. Job losses can be devastating for families at the best of times, but they can be especially devastating during the holidays.

So my thoughts are certainly with those workers and their families, Mr. Speaker. These potash workers have contributed significantly to our province's prosperity, and we are grateful to them. And I'm certainly hopeful that all these workers with their various skills will find good-paying jobs here in

Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I remain optimistic about the future of all of our province's natural resources, but stories like this are further evidence that it's not in our province's best interest to put all our eggs in the non-renewable resource basket. We need to diversify our economy more. We need to do everything we can to use today's prosperity to ensure that our province is an economic powerhouse for decades and generations to come.

In the weeks and months ahead, we'll keep pushing the government on that. But today our thoughts are with the laid off workers and their families, and I'm sure all members join me in expressing our concern and support to them today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hopes for a Peaceful Resolution in Ukraine

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I addressed a rally of members from the Saskatchewan Ukrainian community who had gathered in front of the legislature, concerned about the recent turmoil in Ukraine.

As you know, over the past 10 days more than 300,000 demonstrators have amassed throughout Ukraine to voice their dissent about President Yanukovich's decision to abandon a free trade agreement with the European Union. Rather, the president has chosen to seek greater economic ties with Russia.

Last Saturday, Mr. Speaker, Ukrainian authorities used violence to disperse many of the peaceful demonstrators. The rallies that occurred in Saskatchewan were an opportunity to condemn this use of force and to call upon the Government of Ukraine to support a democratic society where its citizens have the right to express their views.

Even though there was a failed non-confidence vote in the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, today, President Yanukovich's administration did issue an apology for the use of force against its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, we hope for a continued dialogue between the government and the public and a peaceful resolution to this situation. It is important to the future of Ukraine and to the 130,000 people of Ukrainian descent that call Saskatchewan home. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, a fair and democratic society in Ukraine is fundamental to our province's ongoing relationship with that country. Thank you.

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

Hip-Hop Artist Targets Bullying

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, many allies across the province are working to end bullying, and I'm proud to recognize the important work of one from my community. Simply, there's too much hurt, too many tragedies caused by bullying. That is why I'm particularly thankful for a leader like Curtis Adams. Curtis is a former student of mine and a current constituent. He's leading a charge to fight bullying in

Saskatchewan's schools. Curtis, also known as Unkle Adams, is a talented hip-hop artist. He wrote, performed, and produced a music video to support the I Am Stronger anti-bullying campaign. The video was shot in Thom Collegiate and has become a sensation, and therapeutic for many.

Curtis has been in demand as part of anti-bullying presentations at schools across the province, sharing his song and his message. This included a stop in North Battleford where he presented an event to recognize the sad and tragic loss of Todd Loik. The chorus of Curtis's song says this, and I quote, "I am smarter, I am stronger. I will take it no longer. I have feelings. I'm a person. I will live life with purpose."

And Curtis is definitely living his life with purpose. He's sincere in his message. He relates and connects with youth, utilizing his talents and abilities for a greater good. He's a powerful ally in the fight against bullying.

I call on all members of this Assembly to recognize the important work and leadership of Curtis "Unkle" Adams, and to apply his important message to our everyday lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Curlers at Olympic Trials

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in this House today to draw attention to one of the top women's curling teams in Canada, which also happens to have roots in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. Mr. Speaker, Team Lawton, comprised of Stephanie Lawton, Sherry Anderson, Sherri Singler, and Marliese Kasner, are off to a great start this season and are currently competing at the Roar of the Rings in Winnipeg in the hopes to represent our nation at the Sochi 2014 Olympics. Stephanie and Marliese were raised in Shellbrook and their family has for generations now been dedicated to competitive curling and promoting the sport.

Team Lawton, which curls out of Saskatoon's Granite Curling Club, qualified for the spot in the Olympic trials after victory at the 2012 Capital One Canada Cup last December in Moose Jaw.

Each individual brings extensive curling experience and accomplishments to the team. Cumulatively the members of Team Lawton have won 12 provincial championships, three junior national championships, and one world junior curling championship. This is the third consecutive time the team has competed at the Olympic trials, and the valuable experience gained at the past two events will give them what it takes to become Team Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in congratulating Team Lawton on their curling accomplishments and in cheering our Saskatchewan team on as they compete for the honour to represent our country in Sochi next February. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Regina Business Celebrates 60 Years

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to recognize Inland Metal Manufacturing's 60 years of business in Regina.

Bill Craddock Sr. started the metal manufacturing and installation company, servicing the heating and ventilation industry in Regina and surrounding area, in April of 1953. In the spring of 1959, Bill Craddock Jr. who is seated in your gallery joined the company and oversaw the company's growth to three locations, two in Regina and one in Saskatoon, which employs over 35 full-time and numerous part-time staff. Bill Craddock Jr. is now stepping away from this successful business which he oversaw for decades and is being now taken over by a third generation, Mr. Rob Craddock.

Mr. Speaker, this family and business's roots are deep in Saskatchewan and their future is bright. The company also took part in the most recent provincial recruitment drive in Ireland.

This past summer I also had the pleasure of taking part in Inland's barbecue where I witnessed their corporation's citizenship and how well they were received as a company by its employees, the residents, and other businesses within the community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing Inland Metal Manufacturing's 60 years of business and thanking the Craddock family for their hard work and their dedication, making Saskatchewan a better place to live. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Honours for Saskatchewan Physician

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize a constituent of Regina Northeast, Dr. Paul Dhillon, who received the Canadian Medical Association's 2013 Resident Leadership Award and the 2013 Murray Stalker Award presented by the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Mr. Speaker, these awards represent the top honours in the country for medical leadership, and they went to a physician right here in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Dhillon studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and graduated in 2009. The following year, he earned a diploma from the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in the United Kingdom and an International Red Cross certificate in health emergencies in large populations at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. In 2011 he completed a certificate in surgical science at the University of Edinburgh and in 2012 he earned a master's degree in disaster medicine in Italy.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Dhillon completed his family medicine training at the Regina General and Pasqua hospitals. He is currently working as a locum GP [general practitioner] in southern Saskatchewan for the Saskatchewan Medical Association locum relief program. Over the past few months, he has been working in Weyburn, Esterhazy, Ituna, Melville, and

Fort Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Dr. Paul Dhillon for receiving two of the country's top honours for medical leadership and thanking him for choosing Saskatchewan to practise medicine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day of Persons With Disabilities

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to remind all members that today is the International Day of Persons With Disabilities. Our government is pleased to join with jurisdictions across the world in proclaiming this day each year. This year's theme, as chosen by the United Nations, is Break Barriers, Open Doors: For An Inclusive Society For All.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making Saskatchewan the best place to live in Canada for people with disabilities. Today is an opportunity to remind ourselves of that commitment and to celebrate the many contributions that people with disabilities make each day in communities across our province.

We're working to improve their lives by developing a comprehensive, province-wide disability strategy. The process was launched this spring with a call for nominations to the citizen consultation team. The members of the team were announced in October. They have begun their important work, including planning the public consultation process that will take place next spring.

Mr. Speaker, we'll work with our partners in the disability community to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to fully share in the opportunities provided by our growing economy. Working together, we'll meet our goal of making Saskatchewan the best place to live in Canada for people with disabilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Provision of Firefighting Services

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're joined today by proud members of the Saskatchewan Professional Fire Fighters Association. And we're certainly grateful to them, Mr. Speaker, for the work that they do in keeping our families and our communities safe.

One of the concerns that the firefighters have brought to the legislature today, and one that they want to see addressed by this government, is for this government to catch up and support the growth that our province has experienced. This is what the firefighters have to say:

Saskatchewan has seen some impressive growth in population and industry, which means increased risk in our cities. But our fire services have not grown to keep pace.

They have instead seen their capabilities spread over a larger area, protecting more lives and property with the same resources.

My question is for the Premier: why is this government not keeping up with the services that keep Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan property safe?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for his question and recognize again the firefighters that have joined us and thank them for the services that they provide to Saskatchewan people every day.

Mr. Speaker, it is Saskatchewan municipalities that retain and compensate for the firefighters that provide services . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Athabasca is objecting to this for some reason. I'm not sure why; it's certainly the truth. And so, Mr. Speaker, the direct question from the Leader of the Opposition was, how are we as a government working to ensure that we are keeping up with the pressures of growth, Mr. Speaker, in the municipal sector as it would relate to this very important protective service?

Mr. Speaker, the answer is very clear. From the day we formed the government, we have sought to establish and did establish an historic revenue-sharing agreement with municipalities. Revenue sharing to municipalities — who must make the decisions with respect to the complement of firefighters, and pay, Mr. Speaker — is up over 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That's what this government has done to ensure that municipalities can keep up with the pressures of growth. For the first time ever, and they asked for it under the New Democrats, for the first time ever though, they are now tied in their revenue sharing to revenues that come into the provincial government through one point of the PST [provincial sales tax].

[14:00]

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the Premier's rhetoric, the firefighters are saying that our fire services are not keeping pace with the growth of our province, Mr. Speaker. And the firefighters are concerned about that and Saskatchewan families will be concerned to hear that as well. At a time, Mr. Speaker, when our province is doing well, it doesn't make sense for this government not to keep up with the services that Saskatchewan families need and that Saskatchewan families expect in order to stay safe.

Firefighters are asking for a minimum of five fighters per response crew in order to better protect their safety and to better serve the public. And they're asking for funding from their provincial government, Mr. Speaker, to support municipalities in the additional costs to offset the increased need for protective services under that model. Manitoba has done this, Mr. Speaker, and we've certainly seen this government do something similar to that nature with respect to police officers in the province.

My question to the Premier: is he listening to the firefighters on this, and will his government respond to what the firefighters

are requesting?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, municipalities pay for the cost of fire protection in our province. It's the way it's always been. And a pressure on municipalities in the past, prior to '07, is the fact that they were downloaded upon by successive New Democratic governments.

Mr. Speaker, we've sought to change that. We've established a new revenue-sharing formula that has seen revenue sharing increase by 108 per cent so that Regina, which used to get 15.7 million under the NDP [New Democratic Party], now gets 41.068 million that they could use for protective services; Saskatoon from 17 million to 47 million.

Well members are chirping, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition said that this is rhetoric. This is not rhetoric. These are real dollars that have been invested at the municipal level. In Prince Albert, from 2.9 million to 7.4 million; 2.8 in Moose Jaw under them to \$7 million; in North Battleford, 1.1 under the NDP, \$2.9 million today.

Mr. Speaker, we have provided the municipalities of this province with real revenue sharing for the first time in a very long time. They can choose to use these resources for protective services or for other operations of the respective municipalities.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the firefighters are asking for five individuals per crew in order to ensure that the right protective services are there. They're asking for the province to assist with that, to step in as they have with respect to police officers with something similar. My question to the Premier: what is his position on five individuals per crew, and will he support it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we have no objection to that complement, and we've provided municipalities with historic revenue to ensure that that happens. Is it the position of the New Democratic Party that the government would fund, in addition to revenue sharing, these positions? And if so, does the Leader of the Opposition have a number that we can work with?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen this dismissive approach by this government when concerns are brought forward, concerns brought forth today by the firefighters. Another area where we've seen the dismissive approach, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the changes to *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and as it affects professional firefighters here in the province, in many communities including Swift Current.

As a result of those changes, Mr. Speaker, firefighters in Weyburn, Yorkton, North Battleford, and Swift Current, firefighters who are already among the lowest paid within the country, Mr. Speaker, no longer will have access to interest arbitration in the same way that forest fires in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert are able to access.

Firefighters don't think this fair. In fact they say this. On this they say that it is "... wrong and mean-spirited, and it must be remedied."

My question to the Premier: will he listen to firefighters or will he stubbornly dismiss the concerns that firefighters from these communities have brought to the legislature today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I note that the Leader of the Opposition did not have a specific request or remedy for the situation. Maybe he will after question period.

Mr. Speaker, I would say with respect to the specific issue of those municipalities, mayors and councils from those respective cities contacted the government and made this request, Mr. Speaker, to the government for the change of which he's speaking, Mr. Speaker, as we consider the essential services piece, which will come back to the legislature, we're going to have to deal certainly with this issue, and we will. And we'll do it in concert with those municipalities, but we'll also do it in consultation with the firefighters of the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Broten: — My question to the Premier. In his response, he just talked about consultation and discussion that will occur. Why did such consultation, why did such discussions with firefighters not occur until it was simply sprung on them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to the direct question from the member opposite, we heard from municipalities on the issue. We knew that it was being discussed as well at the local level. Municipalities were pretty clear, and frankly they were concerned about long-term sustainability of their respective career departments, Mr. Speaker. They were concerned about it because of what was happening as a result of arbitration. Mr. Speaker, I think, as I had indicated myself to individual firefighters, I think there was a concern that if these settlements went on unabated, what would happen to the complement of career firefighters we have in the province now if municipalities were forced to make certain decisions?

Mr. Speaker, changes were made as a result of input from municipalities concerned about the long-term sustainability of their career departments. We shared them, Mr. Speaker. I would note that essential services changes are coming, Mr. Speaker, and we ought not to preclude some adjustment that might in fact meet the needs as has been expressed by the member.

But again, back to the issue of the number of firefighters in the province, the complement, I want to be very clear. This government has provided municipalities with historic revenue. They can choose to increase protective services. That might be police officers; that might be firefighters, Mr. Speaker. That also might be other operations. Mr. Speaker, we encourage municipalities to make their own decisions. They're certainly independent and able to make those decisions.

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

Labour Market Agreements With the Federal Government

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the federal government has cut its funding for labour market agreements with the provinces. Here in Saskatchewan that will hurt people who are looking for skills training, unemployed and underemployed workers, and it will hurt First Nations and Métis employment opportunities.

Labour force challenges are a major issue for Saskatchewan businesses and our economy. The Premier told the media that the way the grant is structured won't get great uptake in Saskatchewan. As a result, the province will have to backfill because the feds have said, use it or lose it. That could cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan millions of dollars. My question is, why is this government not standing up to the feds and demanding changes to the program so it actually meets Saskatchewan's needs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. This is a very important point. We are in negotiations and discussions with the federal government. The provinces are unanimous in the position that we feel that the market agreements are something that is very important. We want to make sure we get this right with the federal government. That's why there has been numerous meetings, both telephone conference calls and face-to-face meetings, with the provinces and also with Minister Kenney with respect to this important issue. And the Prime Minister's been engaged on this as well, I understand.

So this is something that's important. We're in communication with the federal government on it. I believe that there's going to be a submission going forward. I believe it's at the end of this week, I think Friday, and we are optimistic of the outcome with the federal government.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's concerning because to date that advocacy suggested by that government certainly hasn't had much of an impact. The day after the Premier talked to the media, federal Minister Kenney said, "Obviously the provinces are always going to just demand a blank cheque from the federal government to spend as they please." That's quite the attitude, Mr. Speaker, especially since the Premier met with the minister earlier this month.

To the Premier: did he demand changes to help the programs that helped train Saskatchewan people, and is he simply going to sit back and take the use it or lose it attitude we're seeing from the federal government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work with the other provinces and territories with respect to this very important question. We have had long discussions about

this as provinces and territories. We believe that we have a position that is responsible. We believe it is . . . meets the needs of the labour market across the country. And that is precisely the reason why we continue to work along with the federal government, and will be presenting to them on Friday of this week, a counterproposal that we hope the federal government will accept. We believe that this is an important issue and we'll continue to work therefore.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the feds have made it clear they won't tailor the program to meet Saskatchewan's needs. So Saskatchewan is losing out on federal training funding, and we will be stuck to fill in the gap, potentially, once again from downloading of the costs from a federal government.

When businesses are facing a major labour shortage and they need certainty in these programs and workers deserve nothing less to ensure we're building opportunities for Saskatchewan workers, we need all levels of government working together to increase skills training and opportunities.

To the Premier: since the federal government doesn't look to be moving from its position, what actions is this government taking?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, and I would say with respect to the member, if you're aware of something that I'm not, please bring it to the attention of the Assembly.

The fact of the matter is we are still in discussions with the federal government with respect to this. There has been no decisions taken with the federal government at this point in time. That's precisely the reason why we continue to have a dialogue with the federal government. That's why the provinces are unanimous. That's why the provinces are unanimous, including NDP Manitoba, with respect to this whole process that we're going through right now.

We will present a counterproposal to the federal government, and we will be happy to bring it to the attention of the Assembly once that agreement is concluded.

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

Mental Health Services

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that this government is undertaking consultations about mental health and addictions. Listening is important, and this government does not do enough of it. So I am pleased about the consultations. But I share the disappointment of many families who want this government to act on what it already knows to implement life-saving measures now. To the minister: why is this government waiting to take meaningful action on something as vital as mental health care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through the human services ministries as a part of this government — Health, Social Services, Justice, Corrections, Education, Mr. Speaker — we as a group felt it was important that the province put in place an action plan for mental health services and addiction services within the province, Mr. Speaker, an action plan that we don't have up to this point.

We've hired, Mr. Speaker, a commissioner to do consultations. I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that as of a couple of weeks ago we've already had nearly 2,500 submissions to the online portal, the online consultation tool, Mr. Speaker. That's going to be done in conjunction with the face-to-face meetings of the commissioner, Mr. Speaker, which will ultimately deliver an action plan for this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, our work doesn't begin when the commissioner makes her report. We are taking action, Mr. Speaker. Our mental health budget has gone up 33 per cent in the last six years. We're seeing good work by regions to streamline their services to be able to provide more timely services, Mr. Speaker. And we have some great examples even right here within the capital city, in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Mr. Speaker. And we look forward to the ultimate recommendations of the commissioner.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, as I've already said, I welcome the consultations. Listening is good. But how many more budgets do we need to wait for before this government will do something meaningful when it comes to mental health? Life-saving measures can be implemented now. They need to be implemented now.

Three years ago, Mr. Speaker, a report from the Ministry of Health and Prairie North Health Region acknowledged “. . . the lack of adequate mental health facilities and community resources for persons with severe psychiatric illness and/or persons considered to have high and complex needs.” That report recommended 40 new intensive residential support beds and 80 step-down beds in four health regions.

To the minister: when can we expect some meaningful action on those recommendations back from 2010?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have undertaken action, including moving forward with the new Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, which is in the planning phases. We look forward to making future announcements on that important project for this province, Mr. Speaker. We haven't lost sight of those recommendations from three years ago in terms of that residential support, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the action plan, it was just on April 30th of this year, Mr. Speaker, in committee where the former Health minister, the member for Lakeview asked, “When will we see a mental health strategy for the province of Saskatchewan?” Mr. Speaker, we've had Dave Nelson from the

Canadian Mental Health Association who has said, “We have been asking for a plan for mental health and addictions for many years,” when we launched it in May of this year, Mr. Speaker.

So there are actions that are taking place now to improve services. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to wait even a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, for the further part of this House.

[14:15]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I was at the minister’s announcement about the online consultation process. I spoke to a mother who was invited to attend that event. She was disappointed by the announcement. She thought the government was going to announce some kind of support or improved services for people with mental health issues. So she was devastated, and she is not alone. So many families want to see action. They want government to put in place life-saving measures now.

To the minister: when will this government create new intensive residential support beds and step-down beds?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years we have made improvements in mental health and addictions services within the province, as I’ve mentioned before — a 33 per cent increase in the budget for mental health services in the last six years, Mr. Speaker.

We’re also working with health regions, Mr. Speaker, to put forward a province-wide plan in terms of suicide prevention supports, Mr. Speaker. I believe Sun Country Health Region was contracted by all of the health regions to produce a document to be distributed across the province particularly around youth suicide prevention. We have significantly expanded a partnership with the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and increased their funding 38 per cent over the last six years.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I think something very important for this province is to have a dialogue in terms of how we improve the services and the timeliness of those services through the action plan, Mr. Speaker, something that has been called for by the CMHA [Canadian Mental Health Association] and oddly enough, Mr. Speaker, the member for Lakeview.

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

Design of Children’s Hospital

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this government approved the proposed detailed design of the children’s hospital six months ago, we’ve been hearing a lot of concerns from nurses, doctors, and families.

My question is to the Premier: why will the children’s hospital have fewer maternity beds than RUH [Royal University Hospital] currently has?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In working with a committee that was put together that involves the Saskatoon Health Region, the Ministry of Health, as well as those that work in maternity services within Saskatoon Health Region, Mr. Speaker, they developed the footprint for the building in terms of the numbers of delivery units that would be available, Mr. Speaker, knowing that the way that . . . with the patient experience is different than many years ago when we were planning hospitals in terms of the length of stay and those types of things, Mr. Speaker.

As well, this group has done some extensive work looking at other children’s hospitals like Seattle, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the flow of the patients and the mother and child during and after delivery, Mr. Speaker. They’ve come to a number. They have a group that is working to ensure that that is the proper number to be put in place before construction. And we look forward to, Mr. Speaker, getting on with the construction and opening the new children’s hospital in a couple of years, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I understand through the consultation process and the planning there were some good ideas that were brought forward and that we’ll see in the design, Mr. Speaker. Even with those good ideas though, Mr. Speaker, people have questions and have concerns how it is common sense and how it is a good idea to have fewer maternity beds in the new children’s hospital than the existing RUH.

Between 2008 and 2012, the number of births per year went up 8 per cent. Yet the number of maternity ward beds, Mr. Speaker, will be cut by about 15 per cent when the new children’s hospital opens. Cutting the number of maternity beds at a time when the province’s population is going up and the number of births is going up, Mr. Speaker, simply doesn’t make sense.

My question to the Premier: why is this government proceeding with a plan that will have fewer maternity beds in the new children’s hospital?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, the group that has been put together to put in place the plans for the children’s hospital included front-line workers, Mr. Speaker. It included families, Mr. Speaker, that would use the services.

Mr. Speaker, what we know today is that in terms of the design of, for example RUH, where children would be born, Mr. Speaker, where delivery would take place in one part of the hospital and then the mother and baby would recuperate in another part of the hospital, Mr. Speaker, that’s changing. Mr. Speaker, we’re going to a design where the delivery will take place in the room where the family will recuperate after the

birth, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, the region and the foundation acknowledge that good news, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing increasing numbers of births in Saskatchewan. And they want to be confident in the numbers in terms of those rooms that they'll have in the hospital, and that's why they've set up this group to re-evaluate that number and make a decision before construction begins.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, even if we have a change in process where moms and families are stayed in the same room from assessment to labour delivery to post partum, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't change the fact, Mr. Speaker, that at a time when we see births going up by 8 per cent, we see a decrease in the number of beds in the new children's hospital by 15 per cent. To me, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't sound like this government is planning and ready for growth. To me, Mr. Speaker, it sounds more like they're planning for decline.

And it doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker, why we would be taking this approach when we have a new children's hospital coming to serve families. Nurses and doctors are concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, as are families, what this means in a situation where families and staff are already stretched thin. They're telling us that this will be a concern.

My question to the Premier: why is he ignoring the concerns of front-line health care professionals who say the reduction in the numbers of beds is not a smart approach?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we are including front-line workers. We're including staff. We're including patients and families in the design of the children's hospital. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was at the report out from the design and the room was full of families and front-line workers who were involved in the design, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to give, I think, a news flash to the Leader of the Opposition, we're building a children's hospital. We're not planning for decline under this government, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite. Mr. Speaker, we'll have a children's hospital in this province. We'll ensure that the numbers are appropriate for the growing province, Mr. Speaker, and the growing population, something the members opposite never had to contend with.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, with the construction of a new children's hospital, it's important to get it right. And when we see, Mr. Speaker, when we see births going up and we see the number of maternity beds going down, that's not a common sense approach, Mr. Speaker. That's not something that makes sense to nurses, not something that makes sense to many health professionals, and doesn't make sense to families, Mr. Speaker, because they're concerned what this can mean for their care.

As things are stretched thinly, Mr. Speaker, and as the reduction of the number of beds, many families are concerned that they

will be pushed out of the hospital sooner than they're ready and sooner than they ought to be. With the province growing, Mr. Speaker, with the number of births going up, yet this government is planning for a smaller maternity ward in the children's hospital.

To the Premier: how does this make any sense? What assurance can he give to the moms that they and their babies will not be pushed out of the hospital sooner than they need to with the lack of space?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well you know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that's the same question four or five times asked. It was answered the first time by the minister, Mr. Speaker, in terms of gauging stakeholders on an ongoing basis throughout this process, Mr. Speaker, and even coming back to the question of the size of the ward. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we're going to make sure that the hospital is right sized. And most importantly of all, we're going to make sure that children's hospital is built in the province of Saskatchewan.

I remember lots of promises from members opposite, Mr. Speaker. And I remember the opposition just prior to the last election, including the Leader of the Opposition, going around Saskatoon and making mischief — Mr. Speaker, do you remember that? — when the NDP would go to families in Saskatoon and say, ah the Sask Party said they'd build the hospital, but they're not going to build the hospital. Mr. Speaker, this happens again and again and again. We have the negative nine over there, Mr. Speaker, casting a pall over projects, whether it's in health care or education or the future of the province.

The bottom line is this: this province is growing. And by the way, notwithstanding some current developments today that were absent from members opposite's questions, this province continues to grow. It is diversified, Mr. Speaker, and because of that diversified strong economy, we are investing in health care, including a right-sized children's hospital in Saskatoon.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 127 — *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 127, *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has moved that Bill No. 127, *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of

this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair for the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its fourth report. I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy:

That the report from the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the chairman for the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its fourth report. I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services now be concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the chairman for Crown

and Central Agencies Committee.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee of Crown and Central Agencies to report that it has considered certain estimates, present its fourth report. I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee of Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Chair for the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its fifth report. I now move:

The fifth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services.

Standing Committee on House Services

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm

instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its sixth report. I move:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 210 to 215.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to questions 210 to 215.

[14:30]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Speaker: — Committee of Finance. I do now leave the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Supply

The Chair: — I'll call the Committee of Finance to order. The business before the committee is a resolution by the Minister of Finance, and I call upon the minister to move his resolution.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'll move the following, no. 1:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, the sum of \$113,847,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that resolution no. 1:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to

Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, the sum of \$113,847,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, I move that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to a certain resolution and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The committee is adjourned.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee of Finance.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Finance has agreed to a certain resolution, has instructed me to report the same, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the resolution be read the first time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolution be now read the first and second time.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First and second reading of the resolutions.

The Speaker: — Carried. When shall the committee sit again?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Later this day, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Later this day. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Bill No. 131 — *The Appropriation Act, 2013 (No. 2)*

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — By leave of the Assembly, I move that

Bill No. 131, *The Appropriation Act, 2013 (No. 2)* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has moved that Bill No. 131, *The Appropriation Act, 2013 (No. 2)* be now introduced and read the first time. Is leave of the Assembly granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly and under rule 75(2), I move that the bill be now read a second and third time.

The Speaker: — Is leave of the Assembly granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Leave is granted. It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 131, *The Appropriation Act, 2013 (No. 2)* be now read a second and third time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 126 — *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Minister of Justice to move second reading of *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*. Members will be aware that *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act, 2009* represents a balance between ensuring due process for individuals who may face an allegation of holding criminal property and ensuring that criminals do not benefit financially from their criminal activities. This bill will establish

an administrative seizure process in the Act as a further option for the seizure of criminal property.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will authorize the administrative seizure of cash or personal property with a value under a prescribed amount; allow the director to issue a notice of administrative forfeiture proceedings directly to interested parties regarding property that the director has reasonable grounds to believe is either the proceeds of crime or an instrument of unlawful activity; where no notice of dispute is filed by an interested party, provide for the seizure, forfeiture, and distribution of the property; provide that if a notice of dispute is filed, the director must instead proceed to apply for seizure through the court process or decide not to seize the property; allow an interested party to file a notice of dispute within six months after the deadline if they can show they had a reasonable excuse for having failed to respond to the initial notice.

The present system requires extensive legal document preparation to bring forfeiture applications before the courts, either by notice of application or statement of claim. Unfortunately the same amount of work must be done, approximately 15 hours of document preparation, even if ultimately the respondent entirely fails to respond to the application or whether the application seeks forfeiture of \$100,000 or just \$100.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of an administrative forfeiture regime will improve efficiency and reduce workloads for police witnesses. In an administrative system, the preparation of court documents would not be necessary until it is known that a respondent is opposing the application. Therefore document preparation would be focused on those applications that will be challenged in court. Mr. Speaker, under this process, applications that are unchallenged will result in forfeiture to the Crown at an earlier stage. We estimate that approximately 20 per cent of forfeiture applications are contested. This number is consistent with findings in other provinces.

As noted, this new process would be limited in the regulations to the seizure of cash or personal property under a particular value, such as \$75,000, and could not be used for larger cash amounts or for real estate seizures. An estimated 80 per cent of seizures in Saskatchewan would fall under this dollar threshold.

Under these amendments, the rights of individuals with potentially legitimate property interests are protected. After receiving notice of the intention to forfeit the property to the Crown, an interested party would be able to file a notice of dispute, which would then return the issue of forfeiture to the courts for determination through the same process that the current regime provides.

Mr. Speaker, under the Act, all seized funds are retained in the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to support police operations, or the Victims' Fund. Following the payment of the costs and expenses of seizure, funds seized through the new administrative seizure process would be subject to the same process.

We remain committed to this program and are confident these amendments will assist our officials in continuing to use this legislation, as intended by this Assembly, to prevent

profiteering through criminal activities. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, that Bill No. 121 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, moved by the House Leader that Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act* . . . I'm moving ahead quickly here. It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 126, *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)* be now read the second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to present our initial thoughts on Bill 126, Mr. Speaker. And obviously when we look at the name of the bill, it talks about quite frankly the options of Justice to seize criminal property. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan generally are very supportive of any activity that the government may undertake to protect citizens and to ensure that not only are their children and their families are safe but their property as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, from our perspective as the official opposition, there's no question that we do support swift and orderly justice to those that have criminal activity. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the points that I would raise to folks that are listening to this debate on Bill 126, the legislative changes are talking about when you look at seizing criminal property, is that when the courts or the police officers get involved with somebody that's doing crime, and I guess the most, the quickest example I would think about that comes to my mind here is somebody that might be running drugs, somebody that might be selling drugs, that they're using their vehicles to transport the drugs and the police stop them, Mr. Speaker, and obviously they seize the vehicle, they seize the cash, and they seize the drugs. And generally people in Saskatchewan obviously want to see a very quick and swift justice being undertaken in those cases because drug activity certainly hurts a lot of families and hurts a lot of communities.

So I think overall the people of Saskatchewan wouldn't want to see any unnecessary delays when we're talking about prosecuting the criminals and certainly taking the proceeds of that criminal activity and using it not only for police work but to look at the Victims' Fund support systems that are there as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the bill itself, we do have some questions. Because obviously, as I said at the outset, anything to ensure that we have the administrative and due process attached to seeking out criminals and certainly penalizing criminals, certainly the opposition is in support of that. And I want to really emphasize that. The opposition, as our leader has indicated, we don't want to stand in any way where changes are common sense and they help the people of Saskatchewan. Our directive from our new leader is that we're going to do that kind of supportive effort and to ensure that Saskatchewan benefits overall.

Now I understand from the changes, Mr. Speaker, that when they do have the seizure of property when somebody's involved

with criminal activity overall, that there is an onerous process on the courts to fill out all these forms to say that they've seized this property, and then they have to do all that type of work. And then they have a second process, Mr. Speaker.

And what I understand from the bill is that there's up to close to 80 per cent of the people that get stopped by the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] or involved with the commission of crime that really don't appeal or they don't argue the fact that their vehicle was seized or their asset was seized or cash was seized, that they simply know that they got caught doing this illegal activity. And yet the police or the people that are arresting the criminals are needed to do all this extra work.

What the measure is today is really to eliminate that extra 15 hours of document preparation that the minister alluded to. So from that perspective, if close to 80 per cent of the folks that get caught doing criminal activities . . . And the best example I would use is, say for example they're selling drugs, and the police stop them. They seize the drugs, they seize the vehicle, and they seize the cash, and I think the amount that's identified in the bill is 75,000, to a maximum of 75,000, and then of course that gets seized by the police. And if 80 per cent of them don't argue that point, they're simply going to wait for their day in court, then why do all that extra work? Why do all the 15 hours of preparation if the people aren't going to fight that particular charge right then and there, Mr. Speaker?

[14:45]

There's a number of things that I think that people of Saskatchewan would probably like to see, and of course the premise being that it's got to be orderly justice. Because that's in a sense what's really important, is that if we attempt to bring forward a solid justice system in the province, we must ensure that we're just ourselves. So it's important to allow due process, orderly process. But at the same time, it's also important that we kind of vet out unnecessary administrative processes because these handcuff the RCMP or the police officers in many ways. And certainly from our perspective, the common sense perspective, it appears that this particular bill is going to help the police again in their fight against crime, gives them another tool in their tool kit to be able to address what a lot of people in the province know as problems of an overcrowded courthouse and a lot of administrative work that ties up the justice system for hours on end. And, Mr. Speaker, I think this bill is one step in the right direction and certainly from our perspective we would be supportive of that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a couple of questions on this bill at the outset. Obviously when you look at the criminal activity perspective, and the issue that I used was selling drugs where the police can seize your vehicle and cash if you're found to have been doing anything illegal, the other question I have on this particular bill is under the impaired driving issue. If you're impaired driving, if you're above .08, is that considered a criminal activity? I would assume it probably is a criminal activity from the interpretation of law. So does that mean that that vehicle is also seized, Mr. Speaker? And nowadays there's a lot of vehicles worth more than 75,000. Does this Act apply to those that have been caught with impaired driving above .08? These are some of the questions that we need to know.

How about if a parent or grandparent or aunt or uncle unwittingly knowing was not properly advised at the outset that if you simply loan their family member a vehicle and that family member was doing illegal activities with that vehicle, and they were totally oblivious to that, what rights do they have on reclaiming their property? What's the process there?

So these are some of the initial questions we have in relation to this bill. And we certainly want to be able to talk to some of the legal firms that we have contact with, some of the lawyers that we also have contact with to see if this bill really does exactly what we think and hope it does and that is to ensure that there is a swift, orderly dispersal of criminal handling of many of the people that get involved in that particular activity. We want to make sure that this bill does exactly that. So I think it's important that we ask those questions, Mr. Speaker.

And the other note I would certainly point out is that under the Victims' Fund . . . Because I understand that when you do seize assets, when you do seize property such as a vehicle and the people that take the vehicle away from them, the police take the vehicle away from, they don't argue the fact that the vehicle was seized. And of course they would still have their day in court. The minister made reference to, in his bill in the explanation notes the fact that some of the proceeds would go to the Victims' Fund; some of the proceeds would go to police operations. How does the breakdown of revenues to each of these funds work? Is it 50/50, is it 60/40?

These are some of the questions that we would like to know because obviously if you're using the proceeds of criminal activity to fund police work, that's almost sweet justice in itself. But you're also doing a collaborative effort to support the Victims' Fund, victims of crime and, Mr. Speaker, that's also sweet justice. But we need to know what the breakdown is in terms of having the cost breakdown as to what percentage goes to the Victims' Fund and what percentage goes to the police operations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the 15 hours that you would save in preparing the court documentation to be able to seize these assets, that is from our perspective again a good way to deal with this criminal activity in a quick way. But where's all these issues, where's all these assets stored? Is it in a private storage facility? Is it in a police compound? And what kind of experience has BC [British Columbia] and Alberta had in terms of all the assets that they might seize? Like how do they store these assets and how long does the court process take? What are the costs attached to storing all these assets, and how long do you have to be able to be responsible for the storage of these assets? Because some of the court cases, as you know, Mr. Speaker, can drag on for months and months.

So you look at the bill itself. There's quite a few questions that we have. Obviously the premise of a good justice system is due process, that you have to have due process. I understand that part of the law. At the same time, you needn't have needless administrative procedures if they're not effective in the delivery of that justice system, all the while knowing that due process is important. So administrative processes that are unnecessary are also an impediment in the due process of law.

So I think it's important that we look at all those aspects to

ensure that we're doing this thing properly and that we're doing what the people of Saskatchewan want, and that's a swift, orderly justice system. And, Mr. Speaker, from our perspective as the opposition, we don't want to stand in any way to things that make sense and things that make good common sense for the people of the province.

So I understand, again looking at the bill itself, the questions I obviously have is again obviously those that might be involved with drug dealing, it's a pretty straightforward case for people to understand that the vehicle that they're using, the police can seize that vehicle. Does this bill go into the area of impaired driving above .08? We don't have that question today. And we need to be able to ask those questions because many of us are not lawyers. We're not trained to understand that there is a different . . . the different sections of the Criminal Code, and which applies to where. We don't know, but we need to find those out, Mr. Speaker.

And it's an amazing thing, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the fact that the two, my two colleagues that spoke and participated in the Traffic Safety Committee, they brought up the issue of the impaired driving option of having people's vehicles impounded for up to three days if they're above .05. And it's amazing that this government has decided to not implement that particular part of the bill. We still don't know why on this Assembly because obviously on the one hand, the minister alluded to BC, Alberta doing these kinds of things under this bill. And then they refused to recognize under BC and Alberta and the Traffic Safety Committee hearings that they could impound the vehicle if it's anything above .05, and that saves up to 50 per cent of the lives lost on Saskatchewan highways.

So it becomes a conflicting message here within the Assembly, from our perspective. And so we sit here and we watch one bill come forward, such as Bill 126, and we say well administratively if it makes the court system and the police service more efficient, why wouldn't we support that? And that's my point I made earlier. Obviously there's some good, good common sense approaches to, you know, to doing that.

But in the same token we look at the traffic safety council where we're talking about impounding vehicles that have people who've been drinking and driving with these vehicles above .05, that they actually save lives. Well all of a sudden this government isn't doing, isn't touching that. So it gets kind of confusing from our perspective as to what the government wishes to do when it comes to justice. And that's the question that I automatically instinctively had: does this particular bill impact those that have had an impaired driving above .08, as is that considered criminal activity? Obviously it is, but does it apply under this particular Act?

These are some of the questions that we need to know, Mr. Speaker, because if it does apply under this Act and the people of Saskatchewan ought to know, there ought to be some awareness campaigns to make sure we tell those that are drinking and driving to not do this. Here's another tool that we could implement if you do so. Not only if you're running drugs out of your vehicle but if you're impaired driving, driving down the highway, this could also apply to you. These are the questions that we really need to know.

The other attached questions that I have, Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a bit of time on the Victims' Fund and the police operations fund from this that are attached to this bill. We wouldn't mind hearing how the Victims' Fund is replenished every year. Is there some government contribution to that fund? Is there some services attached to that fund, as opposed to just cash being handed out to some of the victims? Is there counselling attached to that fund? These are some of the things that we need to know.

And of course the police operation, once they seize any kind of asset as a result of the criminal activity attached to this bill, then obviously we'd like to know what the history is in Alberta and BC in terms of dollar value and how the police services use the proceeds over there. What's the most effective way to use those proceeds? These are the questions that we don't know.

Obviously when it comes to Saskatchewan versus BC, they have a greater population than ours, but what kind of revenues can we expect under this particular initiative given the population difference? People can certainly figure out what we can anticipate. And again the questions we have between the Victims' Fund and the police operations fund, how is the breakdown going to be when you do have successful prosecution in court? Were you able to sell these assets and use the money to fund both of these entities? We wouldn't mind finding out (a) the history of these funds, (b) how they're being funded from the intent behind this bill, and (c) what kind of services or cash are available on an annual basis now, and what's the anticipated income as a result of this bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, we want to be very thorough and effective in some of our analysis of this bill. I know I have more learned colleagues — a couple of them are lawyers — that would really give a good perspective on how this bill would make the court system and the justice system more efficient overall. So those are some of the folks that I think would have a lot to say on this particular bill.

And this is the important part that we also want to point out is that there are those out there — law students or lawyers in general, law firms — that wish to offer their advice on how we could interpret the meanings behind this bill. Mr. Speaker, this is the opportunity to do so. And this is the reason why we are always opening up the door and the venue and telling people of Saskatchewan that if you wish, if you wish to participate in analyzing this particular bill, you're more than welcome. The opposition is willing to meet with you and to hear your concerns on this bill. You could email us, you could do . . . you could write a letter or fax a letter. I think some people sometimes still use the faxes. So it's important that we offer that invitation to all the people that are out there.

So again, the bill, a brief wrap-up. From what I understand, it's allowing the government to seize assets, which they would normally do in the course of police work. They would seize assets, and once they seize those assets they don't have to waste a lot of administrative time — up to 15 hours per case — to do all the preparation of documentation if somebody is not arguing with the action of the police. So if that means that the justice system is more efficient, more effective, then as an opposition we would certainly support that.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's still the court process to go through. We understand that. And once the court system is complete, then obviously if the criminals are found guilty, then the assets that were seized are obviously sold and the revenues from the sale of all these assets, whether it's just straight cash or whether it's a vehicle, then obviously those monies would go to two sources of funds for police work and for the Victims' Fund.

And, Mr. Speaker, from our perspective, it certainly does make sense at the outset, but we need to ask more intricate questions as to how this impacts a number of situations. And certainly a number of people that would have information are also asked to participate in giving us advice on this bill.

[15:00]

So, Mr. Speaker, it could be a solid step in the right direction. As I've indicated, if it's common sense, it helps the people of Saskatchewan overall, it means they'll get better administrative process for the justice system, these are things that the opposition could live with. Mr. Speaker, we just simply want to ask a few more questions on a few more fronts so we're comfortable with what we know about the bill, so we're able to explain to people as we travel as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and as legislators. So, Mr. Speaker, on that note, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 126.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 126, *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 121

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 121** — *The Election Amendment Act, 2013* be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise during the debate on amendments to *The Election Act*, Bill No. 121. At the top of my remarks I'd like to state a word of thanks to the Minister of Justice and Justice officials that gave an advance briefing to the member from Saskatoon Centre and myself as to the contents of this bill that will be coming forward. I'd also like to go on record as thanking the Government House Leader for ensuring that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 121, of the items contained therein, there are items that are certainly worthy of support. And there's one item in particular though, Mr. Speaker, where the proof will be in the pudding as to how it goes. And we'll see whether or not it has merit over the long haul or not. But in terms of the number

of the measures contained in the Act, first off the removal of the mandatory requirement for the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, to appoint an assistant chief electoral officer. Mr. Speaker, this response to the request of the Chief Electoral Officer brings the Saskatchewan Act into line with best practices in other jurisdictions for election management bodies throughout Canada, and that would seem to be worthy of support.

The measure that amends the deposit refund provisions to ensure that they are not an unconstitutional deterrent to smaller parties, smaller political parties, or independent candidates, again responding to the Figueroa decision at the Supreme Court of Canada. Again, Mr. Speaker, that would seem to be a fairly common sense measure.

In terms of removing the uncertainty as to what agencies of the government are subject to advertising restrictions by a better, more clear definition of government ministry and assigning that to those meaning ministry and any other government institution as defined and listed under *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — again a fairly straightforward proposition.

The exclusion of routine advertising by government ministries for employment or the procurement of supplies, from the advertising and publication bans prior to an election, again, Mr. Speaker, fairly straightforward and fairly workable.

And then finally, the provision that the 28-day minimum writ period be reduced to 27 days allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to avoid having to issue election writs on a holiday such as was the experience in our province this past election, Mr. Speaker, where the writs were issued on Thanksgiving Monday. Although we'll see if, when the next election takes place because of course if it's the fall of 2015 or April of 2016, still an open question. But we're hopeful that the indications made by members opposite that April 2016 will be the date. We hope that is as good as the Premier's word.

So on balance, Mr. Speaker, we think that there is some good measures in this bill, but the one that we've got, I think, significant misgivings, Mr. Speaker, about out of the opposition benches are the changes concerning how government advertising is counted for the ban that members opposite have brought forward concerning government advertising.

And you know, I've been around long enough to have heard the different allegations that members opposite made about the approach to government advertising and the reason to bring forward the ban. So I guess now that they're coming forward in terms of a change in terms of how that ban is calculated and measured, we'll be very interested to see how that plays out. To the most sort of, I guess, alarming way to estimate the actions of members opposite is that the way that this is now being calculated opens it up to easier manipulation on the part of members opposite.

So there's one way to prove us wrong, Mr. Speaker, and it's to not use the new means of calculating what goes towards the government advertising ban in an obviously partisan way or an unduly jacked-up manner in the years leading up to the election.

The proof will be in the pudding, and how this government advertises in the period of time before the election and how they then calculate their average, that will tell the tale. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, if past is indeed prologue, or if the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour, as you know, some of us are fond of saying in this House, Mr. Speaker, we'll see how that works out.

And again, we hope to be proven wrong in this regard. But I think just of the situation with SaskPower right now, Mr. Speaker, where they're coming forward with a pretty significant rate increase request. Last night I had the opportunity to sit in committee with the member from Nutana as the supplementary estimate was brought forward to increase by \$350 million the borrowing activity of SaskPower this year, a 60 per cent increase over what was initially budgeted, raising it to nearly \$1 billion of borrowing activity. Again, Mr. Speaker, against that backdrop we've got a fairly significant \$700,000 ad campaign being run by SaskPower.

So communicating with ratepayers, communicating with the province, that's one thing. But there are some things that this government does, Mr. Speaker, that it's hard not to get beyond the smack of propaganda. But that I guess is the best that we've got in terms of how members opposite carry themselves forward with this change to the legislation. And we will be vigilant in watching how that works out, and again we hope to be proven wrong, but time will tell the tale.

On balance though, Mr. Speaker, and as well in conjunction with assurances that have been afforded to us as the official opposition that other pressing changes that are needed for *The Election Act*, Mr. Speaker, as regards the establishment and then implementation of a permanent voter registry, that that might proceed in a timely and cost-effective manner, Mr. Speaker, and in a way that better assures individuals in this province access to the electoral process. Assurances have been made in that regard. Assurances have also been made that work will be brought forward concerning better access for those with disabilities to the electoral process. And again, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to those being, those undertakings, being made good on.

And it is at that juncture, Mr. Speaker, that we are willing to have an expedited process for *The Election Act* amendment, that it might proceed in a way that enables those important changes around a permanent registry to come and better accessibility for those with disabilities to our electoral process to come as well.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude my remarks on Bill No. 121 and turn matters over to those opposite.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

[Clause 6 as amended agreed to.]

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

[Clause 7 agreed to.]

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

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013*. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013* be committed to the Committee of the Whole and that the said bill be considered in Committee of the Whole immediately.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that the committee report the bill with amendment.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Committee of the Whole.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee report Bill 121 with amendment. Is that agreed?

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Committee of the Whole.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair.

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

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY ON BILLS

Bill No. 121 — *The Election Amendment Act, 2013*

The Chair: — I call the Committee of the Whole to order. The item before the committee is Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013*. Clause 1, short title, is that clause agreed?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Chair, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Is there any debate on this bill? Seeing none, clause 2, is that agreed?

The Chair: — Carried. The committee is adjourned.

[Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

[15:15]

Clause 6

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

The Chair: — Clause 6. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013* with amendment.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would move that:

The Speaker: — When shall the amendments be read the first time? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Clause 6 of the printed bill

Amend section 277.1(1) of *The Election Act, 1996*, as being enacted by Clause 6 of the printed Bill, by striking out “28-day” and substituting “27-day”.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

Bill No. 121 — *The Election Amendment Act, 2013*

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

The Chair: — The Government House Leader has moved an amendment to clause 6. Do members agree with this amendment as read?

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the amendments be now read the first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is clause 6 as amended agreed?

The Speaker: — Carried.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That’s carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First and second reading of the amendments.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read the third time? I recognize the Government House Leader.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 121 — *The Election Amendment Act, 2013*

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — By leave of the Assembly, I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave for Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 121, *The Election Amendment Act, 2013* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — The next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 107

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 107 — *The Wildfire Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's an honour to rise in the House today to have an opportunity to speak to Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act*. And of the various bills that I've had an opportunity to speak to this session, Mr. Speaker, this is one that actually reflects a fairly substantive change and some new policy that's being put into legislation. So it's a good opportunity to be able to actually get up and speak to a bill with some substantial changes to it, and I'm thankful to have the opportunity to do that.

So what we have from the Ministry of Environment here is basically a rewrite of the old prairie and forest fires Act from 1982. And as you read through the former Act or the Act that's currently in place, you can see that it is one from a number of decades ago, and certainly a rewrite I think in this circumstance is appropriate. It's 30 years old, and there's been a number of amendments to it over the years. But at this point in time, it's appropriate and I think a good move on the part of the ministry to update and modernize not only the language in the previous Act but also the activities, reflecting the changing nature of activities in the forest fringe here in Saskatchewan after 30 years.

We see a number of measures being introduced in the bill, and I'll speak to a few of them individually, Mr. Speaker. Overall we know that there has to be careful balance in the management of the forest resources in Saskatchewan and the industrial activity that takes place in the forest, and also to protect and ensure that wildfires don't destroy. As we know, wildfires can be very destructive and indeed can spread quickly and over boundaries that we may not recognize. For example fire can start in the national land, either in DND, Department of National Defence, land or on a First Nations reserve or in the national parks. It could spread into the provincial Crown land and even into rural municipalities. So there's quite a few ways for forest fires to be managed, and certainly the province has a big role to play in that.

I think there's some major changes that need to be talked about in this bill, and they are represented in some ways under different parts of the Act that are now being presented, different parts of the bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we have I think one of the first ones I wanted to talk to is part VI of the new bill. It's called industrial or commercial operations. If you look in the old Act, it's mostly found around section 21 of the Act that's currently in place. And you will see if you go through that, that it's a very short section. And there's actually three sections under the existing Act, sections 21, 22, 23, and I guess 24, that are dealing with industrial activities.

This portion of the Act has been considerably expanded, and I think what's notable for many in the province, and particularly those who are conducting activities in the forested area of the province, the responsibility now for industrial or commercial operators to do a heck of a lot more than they had to do in the existing Act, Mr. Speaker. And I think the most important thing for people of those types of industries and commercial activities to note is the requirements under section 20 of the new Act, sections 21 and 22 and then 23 and 24. So this is all under part VI of the new bill.

Section 20 is a very, very substantial change, and it's something that people need to take note of because what it requires is that any industrial or commercial operator in the forested area, or what they call designated lands under the Act, are required now to prepare and submit to the minister for consideration a wildlife prevention and preparedness plan. So not only are you out there conducting your business — and I'll get into detail of who these people are in a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but anyone who's conducting these activities as defined under the Act are now required to prepare and present a plan. The plan has to be approved by the minister or his designate. And there's

a number of things that can happen if that individual or that operator doesn't follow the plan or if they refuse to submit a plan and continue with their operations.

One of the interesting pieces of the timing of these plans is that these preparedness plans have to be submitted, under 20(1)(a), before the start of a wildfire season. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know when the wildfire season starts? Do I know when the wildfire season starts? This is something that is prescribed by regulation. So any operator in the province who's operating in these designated lands now has to seek out in the regulations when the wildfire season is about to start. And if they start their operations before the wildfire season, they still have to submit their plan. Or if they start after the wildfire season, they still have to submit a plan before they can start to conduct their activities.

Now I just want to talk a little bit about the definition of operator and industrial and commercial activities. If you go to the definition section in the new bill and look under industrial or commercial operation — that's section 2(l) — you will see that:

“industrial or commercial operation” means:

an activity carried on in connection with forestry operations . . .

I'll just stop there for a second, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Forestry operations can include a wide range of activity. And we're not exactly sure if this will apply to people that are cutting firewood for their own personal use or perhaps selling firewood, small operations like that. Will it include berry pickers and people who harvest different types of edible materials from the forest? Are they required to submit a preparedness plan and follow all the rules we see?

If I go on the list here, the types of activities, it continues on by saying “. . . mining, oil and gas operations, mineral exploration, road construction and maintenance, the operation of public utilities, outfitting, peatmoss operations, the operation of institutional camps and railway operations.”

And it goes on in the next subclause to say “any activity or development, other than one mentioned [above] . . . that is prescribed in the regulations or the code.” Well that's a very, very broad definition, Mr. Speaker. And my concern, I think those people who conduct activities in the forest fringe or in the forest itself will really need to pay attention to whether or not they fall under this definition. Because if they don't and if they don't prepare the plan and submit it before the start of the wildfire season . . . So we're talking about some fairly remote operations that won't have easy access or knowledge of regulations passed defining when the forest fire season starts. They won't have ready access to how to fill out these forms and these plans. And there's a lot I'll speak more about in terms of how these plans must be prepared.

So I think there's a chance that . . . There better be . . . I'm really hoping the ministry has an education program in place that will really inform people and ensure that they have easy access to these forms and access to help filling them out and access to education on how to prepare a preparedness plan that

meets the ministry's requirements.

I think most of these people that are operating these kinds of smaller operations in forested land are very, very aware of forest fire and the significance of forest fire protection and prevention. And I mean they live up there; they understand it carefully. But if they haven't had any expertise designing plans that meet ministry requirements, I'm suggesting that the ministry will need to provide considerable assistance and support to those types of people in order to ensure that they don't fall under the penalty clauses.

And I'll note, just on that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that under part X of the new Act, the penalties have actually been doubled. So an individual can now receive a fine up to \$500,000 instead of \$250,000, and a corporation could receive a fine up to \$1 million for each day that they're in violation, and that's up from \$500,000.

So certainly the ability of an individual to meet all the requirements under this new part of the Act is something I think is going to require some education and assistance from the ministry in order to ensure that people don't fall foul of the law without realizing that they're doing so. And as I say, these are folks who are very, very aware and knowledgeable about forest fires and how they're started and how important it is to ensure that they're prevented.

Another thing about the definition that's not entirely clear to me, we have outfitters being included in the definition. There's so many outfitters in the North that have been operating for decades and in some case centuries and millennia in terms of trapping and hunting in the area. And this requirement for a wildfire prevention preparedness plan and that has to be in . . . This is section 20(3) which says, “The wildfire prevention and preparedness plan must be in a form and contain the information prescribed in the regulations or the code.”

So these outfitters are going to have to read the code and the regulations. They're going to have to access the form. And they're going to have to ensure that it's submitted in time for them to begin their operations or before the wildfire season, which again is being prescribed in regulations. So this is something that I think is going to be very onerous for people who have been operating in the forest for many, many years. And I'm really hoping — the minister didn't speak to this — but I'm hoping that he and his officials are going to ensure that people have the tools they need to meet the requirements of this new plan.

I mean, certainly we know that the larger industrial operations — mining, oil and gas activities and even, Mr. Deputy Speaker, activities of public utilities and railways — are being included in this. That makes sense. It totally makes sense. Those people are conducting activities in the forest area. They need to be able to file these plans, and they have the resources and the wherewithal, I would suggest, to ensure they meet those requirements. But it's for the smaller operators and smaller individuals in the outfitting area, or as I say, berry picking, mushroom picking, all those types of people will fall under this Act, but they may not realize that they're required to do so, and they could be subject to fines. So I'm hoping the education process will be well thought out.

The minister talks about a code that's forthcoming and regulations that are forthcoming under this Act. It's difficult to speak in the abstract, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I've mentioned this before. But certainly we'll want to have an opportunity to look at this code, look at the regulations to see if they meet the intentions that he's stating this bill is achieving. So again we're just going to have to wait and see and have a look at them when they come out. So we're not sure how that's going to work.

We also know that under section 20(4), the minister can delegate any of his powers under this section to a ministry officer or an enforcement officer in *The Parks Act*. So a lot of folks in the field are going to be given the responsibility of reviewing these plans and enforcing them and making sure that they're being submitted. So there's going to be a pretty onerous task I think for some of the ministry officials as well. So it's a big change. And I know we're hoping that it's properly staffed and that the minister ensures that his own officials are given the tools they need to help the operators comply with these plan requirements.

Section 22 is a fairly long section that talks about orders that can be made by the minister if the operator doesn't prepare this plan. And the minister will have some very, very powerful . . . well some great powers to stop that activity, which is appropriate I think if necessary and people are defying the law. It certainly is something that we want to know that the minister can do. There's a number of things under that Act that I won't go into detail. But certainly there's some strong powers here for the minister to ensure that people are submitting and preparing and submitting proper plans.

And there's, going on from there, Mr. Speaker, there's a section on railways, which as you can imagine, there's fire hazards in relation to the operation of a railway.

[15:30]

The other part I wanted to talk about is the part VIII which talks about new developments on designated lands. And there's a new buzzword I guess, if you want to call it, that the minister and the officials have included in this section, and it's called the interface wildfire hazard. And there's a rating and an assessment that is being used. Now what's going to happen here . . . This is for new developments on designated lands. When we talk about designated lands, those are Crown lands. They're not within an RM [rural municipality] but they're Crown lands. But as you can imagine, there is a lot of activity going on in Crown lands in the forested area in Saskatchewan, and this is a whole new regime for new developments.

So this is part VIII of *The Wildfire Act*, proposed wildfire Act, and it's called new developments on designated lands. So there's something called an interface wildfire hazard, and what we're going to see is that for the purposes of this Act . . . This is section 29:

For the purposes of this . . . [Act and] subject to the regulations, the minister may undertake or cause to be undertaken an interface wildfire hazard assessment of all or any designated lands to determine the . . . hazard rating for . . . [that] land.

And then under subsection (2), there is a requirement here. "Subject to the regulations and the code, an interface wildfire hazard rating must establish design, construction and vegetation management requirements for any new development."

This is a very significant change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the current Act. So this is again something that will require a fair bit of education and I believe working with people who are doing development in the designated areas. And so this is something that we'll be looking for some additional information on as we go through this new regime.

Section 30 is called requirements for new developments, and under that section, "No person shall undertake a new development on designated lands except in accordance with this Part, the regulations, the code and the interface wildfire hazard assessment mentioned in section 29." And we don't have a lot of information at this point on what those assessments will look like and how they will be designed. Again we have to wait for the regulations and the new code that has been promised in order to fully assess this.

Another section that isn't new that I think is just of interesting note is section 45, powers regarding terrorist activity. And I was interested to see this clause. It was introduced originally in 2003, so you can see it was a response to some of the happenings in the world at that time but that we do have . . . and it's been kept whole in the new Act regarding powers regarding terrorist activity. So interesting to see something like that in the Act, and it's a historical reflection of things that were going on 12 years ago.

In part X I talked earlier about the hiking up of the fines. We're now doubling . . . The fines are doubled from the previous Act. What we also find in this part X, which is called offences, penalties, and administrative penalties, we find additional powers of the court. So the court has several new powers that are available under section 47, section 48, and section 49.

Under section 47, the court, if they've convicted somebody, can make a number of orders now. They could prohibit the person who's convicted from doing anything that in their opinion would result in a continuation of the offence. They can direct a convicted person to pay to the Crown an amount of money as compensation for all the costs that were incurred for things like controlling, extinguishing the fire, but it goes on to say, "the costs necessary to rehabilitate or reforest the land," and to replace costs for any Crown property or equipment that was damaged or destroyed. So there's a number of orders that the court can now do that were not in the old Act.

We can also, under section 48, we see the minister can now apply for a compliance order. So here the minister can go to a judge and get an order compelling that person to comply with the Act or with a wildfire prevention or preparedness plan. So you may file a plan, have a business, sell your business. The new owner comes along, and if he's not following that plan, the minister can get an order from the court requiring him or her to follow that plan. And there's a number of other types of things that the minister can apply for in terms of ensuring that people comply with the Act and with their plans.

Another new section — and I think this is an interesting one —

is a section regarding vicarious liability. So this means that people, even if you're not physically present but if you should have known that whatever was happening on that area that you have control over in some way, is that you can be also convicted of the offence. So I think it extends quite appropriately responsibility for fires even though if people should have known or ought to have known that fire was likely in terms of the activities that were going on, then they can also be held liable and be prosecuted of an offence under this Act. So I think that's appropriate and something that certainly will place responsibility where it's due.

Under part XI we see that the inspections and investigations section has been greatly expanded. And again I think this is appropriate. As I mentioned at the onset, that the modernization of this type of Act has to reflect the types of activities that are going on in the forest fringe.

We see in part XII, under the general part, we now have a First Nation being included in the ability of the minister to enter into a fire control agreement with. And my only issue there is in terms of the definition itself. We have the definition using the word band as the defined term, and really in this day and age it should be First Nation. Although we know that they're still referred to as Indian bands within the *Indian Act*, I think the general use these days is to just define them as First Nations. So that would be something that really probably should be fixed.

We see under the regulations section — there was obviously a regulations section in the old Act — this one is greatly expanded as well. There's a much larger description of the types of regulations that could be passed under this Act. And I guess those are the main changes.

I think one of the most important clauses though, that I'm pleased to talk about in terms of this bill, is the responsibilities of rural municipalities when fires occur within a municipality. And we know that many rural municipalities were very concerned earlier this year about responsibilities for Crown land fires that occur within the RM boundary. And the original proposal from the ministry was that the government may come in and handle the fire if the RM couldn't handle it, but that the RM would have to pay. We know we heard from a number of rural municipalities that were very concerned about the onerous cost that would be imposed upon them if this went through.

And in fact we re-raised the concerns in the middle of April here in this legislature about what we were hearing from RMs and the unfairness of the proposed changes. And I note with interest that by the middle of May, a month later, the province indicated and the minister indicated that he was going to back off of that proposed change. And we certainly appreciate that the minister heard the people and was listening to what we were raising here in the House and that he saw fit to back off on that proposed change.

So what we see now is in section 11 which is titled, "Rural municipality responsible for all fires within the municipality," that it has a list of all of the things they are responsible for. And it includes private land and occupied Crown land, lands within an environmental reserve or public or municipal reserve, roads, rights of way, any structures, vehicles, landfills, transfer stations, and waste collection sites, and they're responsible for

controlling the fire and paying the cost associated with that.

But the big clause I think that's very important to the rural municipalities in the forest area is (2) which says, "If a wildfire originates within that part of a wildfire management area that is in a rural municipality, the minister is responsible for controlling and extinguishing the wildfire." And I think that's something that certainly many, many rural municipalities in the forest fringe area will be pleased. And certainly there was an article in the *Northern Pride* in Meadow Lake indicating that this was something that was indeed welcomed when the minister agreed to back off on that change. So we were very pleased to see that, Mr. Speaker, as part of the rewrite here for *The Wildfire Act*.

And at this point I think, Mr. Speaker, that that pretty much wraps up my comments at this point in time. I look forward to having an opportunity in committee to examine some of the questions we have in more detail and get some more answers from the minister and his officials. So that concludes my remarks on Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

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

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

Bill No. 111

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 111 — *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to rise to Bill 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act*. I think before talking a little bit about this bill, I think it's important to discuss what a personal care home is versus a long-term care home, or which is otherwise a special care home, in some parlance a nursing home, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So a personal care home is privately operated, although it is

regulated by the provincial government, so regulated and monitored, as opposed to a long-term care facility which is mostly publicly funded, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this response, this personal care homes amendment Act is dealing specifically with the privately run personal care homes which generally deal with a lower level of care. The individuals who are living in personal care homes generally require a lower level of care than you would find in a long-term care facility, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This bill in itself will . . . The legislation put forward is to allow the opportunity for inspections of personal care homes to be placed online so the public has access to this in order to be able to better choose which personal care home they or their family members may end up residing in, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do know my two colleagues here, who are both lawyers, have both pointed out that they're not sure why this legislation is necessary in terms of being able to put these reports on personal care homes online. I know the minister has said that. But I know my two colleagues have raised that as a possibility that legislation may not have been necessary to be able to do this.

The minister in his second reading speech points out that this change, this need to have more accessibility to information about personal care homes, comes directly from a recommendation from both the Ombudsman and the Provincial Auditor. So both the Ombudsman and the Provincial Auditor have in fact called for increased transparency around inspections and monitoring of these facilities.

So again though, I do have two colleagues who have raised the question of whether or not the legislation is necessary. I am not a lawyer myself and, not knowing the intricacies or the ins and outs of this, I am not sure myself. But we do have this Bill 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act* before us.

I do think, in the larger picture of things, we've been talking a great deal this last six to eight months or so about care for seniors here in Saskatchewan. I know Carrie Klassen was here in the spring and raised some very serious concerns. I guess one might say she sounded the alarm about concerns in long-term care with seniors. She flagged the gross understaffing in many cases of many long-term care facilities, the ones that are publicly funded.

And following many questions in the legislature, where initially the minister had said that there was no cause for alarm, the minister did agree to embark upon a CEO tour, checking out some of these long-term care facilities and reported back. Well the report was done in the summer and I know we didn't have access to that at that point. It wasn't a public document. But the opposition had done a freedom of information request, and coincidentally enough in the fall, just a couple of months ago, the report was released the day of or the day following the due date of the freedom of information request, Mr. Speaker. So it took that information request to dislodge this report from the government, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

And it did raise some very alarming concerns. Seniors, continent seniors being left to soil themselves because there was nobody there to be able to get them to the toilet. It showed

stories of seniors who were being woken up at 5:30 in the morning because there wasn't enough staff to be able to get them up at the appropriate time, at their desired time. Just because you're in a long-term care home doesn't mean you should have to get up at 5:30 because there's not enough staff to help you when you're ready to get up, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to, well, a serious lack of . . . understaffing, but in essence a lack of rights.

When seniors become residents in long-term care homes, by and large they seem to relinquish some of these rights that you and I have — the right to dignity and a good quality of life. Not because staff aren't doing the very best that they can. You hear story after story from seniors who speak very highly of the staff that are there, but they speak of the serious understaffing in many of these long-term care facilities.

It's interesting. The government just two years ago quietly removed the reference to sufficient staffing in regulations, so totally watered down the minimum care standard in these long-term care homes. It used to be two hours and that was removed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I know that the minister's gotten up and said, well it's really important to have individualized or personalized care, which is absolutely true. But the point of a minimum standard is that the care can't drop below that bar, that every person is entitled to at least this quality of care, Mr. Speaker. So that's the point about having a minimum level of care and having a minimum care standard.

I know the minister in question period has talked about people in long-term care. I think actually he used the words, 20 minutes. Perhaps there are some people in long-term care who only need 20 minutes of care here in Saskatchewan, but I would question that. Long-term care, by the time you reach long-term care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you've been assessed at a very high level of care. So to think that a senior or anyone living in a long-term care facility would only require 20 minutes of care is hard to accept. It's possible, perhaps, but I would say that it is doubtful. People who are long-term care are assessed at what used to be level 3 and level 4, much higher care level needs than others, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have heard cases. Sylvia Phillips who was waiting for a long-term care bed who sat in a hospital, an acute care facility, for seven weeks waiting for long-term care. She had suffered from some dementia and had some trouble taking care of herself, and staff again had been run off their feet. And her own family used up all their vacation days — they weren't from here, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and they ended up having to hire private staff to come into the hospital to ensure that their mother got to the washroom and got fed. I think that that story around eating and nutrition has been one that's repeated itself. The Law Reform Commission actually speaks to that, food and nutrition, being a huge issue in long-term care.

So we think that the government had proposed a \$10 million emergency action fund to deal with the difficulties in long-term care, but the reality is one of the largest health regions in Saskatchewan, the Saskatoon Health Region, the CEO of that health region actually identified that in fact this \$10 million is a drop in the bucket. A good percentage of that \$10 million would go to ensuring that every resident in long-term care there would receive two baths, and that's just scratching the surface,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. That this \$10 million does nothing to address understaffing. It's a one-time fund. It doesn't do anything to add to the complement of staffing. This is about fixing infrastructure.

So I know that this is what the CEO, Maura Davies, has said. She's talked about the problems in the Saskatoon Health Region around long-term care, and some of the issues are specifically understaffing and infrastructure. And this fund is just scratching the surface, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I know, I think that's the broader issue here is that seniors' care in Saskatchewan is in crisis, and we do have reason to be concerned.

I'm the daughter of two aging parents, 80 and 81 years old, who are thankfully still in their own home. And I hope that with five siblings all still in Saskatoon that we will be able to ensure that our parents stay in their home for as long as possible. But it is worrisome to think about the state of long-term care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I worry very much for my parents and their friends, that they will not have what they need.

And again, I know that staff is working incredibly hard. And it's all kinds of front-line staff. It's nursing staff. It's special care aids. It's LPNs [licensed practical nurse]. It's cleaning staff, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When Suzanne Stewart, a retired registered nurse who had worked here in Saskatchewan for a very long time had approached us, she had had the occasion to spend some time in a Saskatchewan hospital. And she had said that her time for her surgery in the hospital had shown her that things in health care had gotten far, far worse. She talked about feces on the bathroom wall and vomit on the floor, and cleaning being a very big issue. And coincidentally enough, in the CEO report, that was flagged as an issue as well.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the big issue here is around long-term care, around seniors' care. Not just around long-term care but around home care. I know the government has put some money into a pilot project in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, adding to what they've done here in Regina, which is good.

But I know there are many seniors who are still in acute care facilities in hospitals who are waiting for a long-term care placement, and unfortunately they will not be going home. Home care is not an option for them at this point in time, and they don't have any place to go. And so this is not just about long-term care; this is about the whole continuum of care and making sure that our seniors have what they need.

So again, I know the minister with Bill 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act*, will be putting up inspections of personal care homes in order to be able to provide individuals and families with information about different personal care homes in the province, which is positive, but I think ultimately the bigger picture here is about ensuring our seniors have dignity and quality of life in their latter years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I will conclude my remarks here and I know that we will have further questions when we get to committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So thank you for the time to speak to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Deputy Speaker: — This bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Bill No. 112

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 112** — *The Accounting Profession Act* be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter discussion as it relates to Bill No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*, here today.

Certainly I look forward to putting a few comments onto the record here in this Assembly, but what I really look forward to is certainly being supportive of the good work of the accounting professions and designations in this province and making sure that this legislation is enabled and getting it into committee to do just that, to make sure that we are co-operative on that front.

Certainly as it relates to accountants in this province and the designations, this is an important piece of legislation. There's over 4,000 members, almost 1,000 students, and of course accountants in the accounting firms play an incredibly important role to Saskatchewan communities and to Saskatchewan businesses, to our economy as a whole.

It's those accountants that, in many ways, are there managing risks within organizations, managing risks within government, ensuring proper accountability for whether it's taxpayers or for shareholders or for the investments that are placed. And really it's accountants and their planning and their management that certainly assist in fulfilling a lot of the business and entrepreneurial opportunities within our province.

So accountants are very important to this province, whether

they're fulfilling a role in the public service, whether they're leading roles and managing risk in providing opportunities in business, or whether they're in CBOs [community-based organization] and organizations across the province.

What I recognize that's important for this piece of legislation is that what I've heard from the three designations that are going to be amalgamated into one, that there's support for these changes and in fact that those designations have driven these changes, that they've been involved in these changes, that they've directed these changes, as they should, Mr. Speaker, because these changes are arrived at in a democratic fashion by way of the members of each of the designations, whether it's the chartered accountants or the certified general accountants or the certified management accountants. They've all gone through their respective processes for some time and democratically arrived at this position, this amalgamation, and they've decided democratically that this is in the best interest of the profession and in serving the people of this province.

This also provides an opportunity for our accountants and for our firms to participate in potentially a broader way in an international perspective with new business opportunities, and certainly we want to enable that.

And certainly to those leaders within their respective organizations, I simply want to say thank you to them for their voice in making this happen, for representing their members and for seeing this process all the way through to drive legislation that meets the needs of their members. We'll have some questions in committee moving forward, but I have had the opportunity to sit down with the accounting designations and to discuss this Act and to discuss their opportunities that they are pursuing, and certainly I understand that those designations are supportive of these changes and, as I say, thankfully have driven these changes. The accounting professions designations have submitted a letter of support for the new joint venture, for the self-governing body that's been created as the CPA, the chartered professional accountants, and we'll certainly discuss these pieces moving forward. And we'll be touching base as this bill proceeds to ensure that the accountants who have been involved in this process all the way through are engaged in there until it's passed in a way that meets their needs.

So at this point in time, I say thank you to all the accountants across this province, those that have engaged in this process. And certainly it's important for us as a legislature to act in their best interests and to understand the democratic will that they've exercised and to be able to put these professions or this profession into a footing that allows it to engage from an international perspective. And I would like to say that because of the leadership of Saskatchewan's accountants and their designations, that they have actually provided leadership that will allow Saskatchewan potentially to be one of the first provinces to have successfully and democratically achieved this new designation and this amalgamation. And certainly leadership is something that we know Saskatchewan people are always willing to provide. So I thank them for that leadership, look forward to future discussions, and I look forward to engaging in committee.

That's all I have to say at this point in time as it relates to Bill

No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*, be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Deputy Speaker: — [Inaudible] . . . shall this committee be referred to? I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Bill No. 109

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 109 — *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

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

[16:00]

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Glad to be recognized to join debate today on Bill No. 109, *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2013*. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that we'll be consulting on quite vigorously, Mr. Speaker, quite diligently, perhaps even more so than might otherwise be the case.

From this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we watched this last budget come forward and the changes that were made impacting the different labour-sponsored vent cap vehicles in this province with a great amount of interest. And we'll be also interested to see, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the limitations and the changes that were made at that time, to see how far down the line this particular piece of legislation goes to fixing some of the problems that were set in play this last budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Certainly venture capital is something that's hotly sought after in any economy, but it's particularly the case for the Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker. And in terms of the importance of venture capital to get those dollars into the hands

of the entrepreneurs to turn ideas into actual innovation within our economy and to in turn diversify our economy, Mr. Speaker, those are some very helpful, very important things that a government can do, working with the private sector and with venture capitalists, to ensure that that is the case.

So again what happened last budget, Mr. Speaker, we watched with great interest, and we're quite interested in this piece of legislation as it comes forward here today.

In his second reading speech, Mr. Speaker, the minister referenced the fact that the legislation will be amended to allow for the following:

the Act to prescribe in regulation that a percentage of pooled funds annual net capital must be invested into innovation type investments. The minister will set the form by which tax credits will be issued to investors in the future and other housekeeping amendments.

Mr. Speaker, what we see here is again something that we think is an emergency tendency on the part of this government wherein they are moving powers that are previously held within the legislation into regulation. And the sort of accountability and transparency that is involved in the legislative process, Mr. Speaker, being shifted into the regulatory side of legislation, generally it takes away from the ability to be able to rise in this Assembly and say on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and to do that consultation with the stakeholders when changes come forward, that of course this opportunity that I'm availing myself of right now is not any longer possible. It becomes a much more closed thing in terms of the whims and caprices of the government of the day, Mr. Speaker.

So in terms of taking things out of the plain light of day that is available in this Legislative Chamber, moving powers into regulation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it diminishes the ability of the people of Saskatchewan to see very clearly what that government is up to.

And again, Mr. Speaker, with the measures that came forward in last year's budget and the impact that they had on the labour-sponsored venture capital funds in this province and the way that it put what had been a very successful approach to providing venture capital on a bit of a disadvantaged footing as compared to other jurisdictions, again that came forward in something as high-profile as the budget. But moving powers such as the determination of which pools must be invested in into the regulatory side of government activity, it diminishes that ability of people to hold this government to account and to plainly understand what's being attempted in different legislation. So we look at that with great interest, Mr. Speaker.

And again going through the legislation and the sort of context in which this is happening, we also see now that the federal government is backing off on some of the tax incentives that have been in place for a number of years for labour-sponsored venture capital funds. Again an interesting development from a government that proclaims itself interested in growing business and working in a responsive and co-operative manner with the business sector. Mr. Speaker, interesting to see that coming forward.

We see the minister outlining the intent being to increase investment in what the innovation type investments are, but wanting to ensure investments are properly managed and that the funds are carefully invested in local businesses and traditional Saskatchewan enterprises.

Again, Mr. Speaker, how the minister came forward at budget time, I know it took a fair number in this sector off guard. So again in terms of that due diligence that any government should be doing but that is . . . In terms of the job of the official opposition, working to hold the government to account, we will be definitely, vigorously, and diligently going out to talk to the folks that this is not just a . . . that this is their livelihood. This is their daily occupation, Mr. Speaker.

So without much further ado, I think I am ready to move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 109, *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act*. I so move.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 109, *The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 108

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 108** — *The Athletics Commission Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and enter into debate on Bill No. 108, *An Act respecting the Athletics Commission and Professional Contests or Exhibitions*.

It's a very interesting piece of legislation we have before us. And of course we've heard so much about these kind of things. And I don't know if others have been lobbied for movement on this type of thing. I know I have been over the last few years.

And so it will be an interesting thing as we move this forward and we hear more. I hope we do hear more from the people involved. Quite often I mean these folks will contact the government, but it's important to contact us too because it helps us to understand. Because so often we get our information from the media. And I can just tell you that, you know, I've been actively watching and following the acquired brain injury folks and what they do and their concerns, and we've not heard anything from them on this. And that's a big, big issue, you know.

And I know SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] has been actively involved in that. And we often think of acquired brain injury as something that comes from accidents, but ironically we're seeing more and more that it's coming from sports. And you know, we've heard of two big lawsuits in

professional sports, one of course in the professional football arena with the NFL [National Football League] and the settlement of that in terms of concussions. Now we've just heard now that a group of NHL [National Hockey League] players have put together a lawsuit in a very similar fashion, talking about brain injury through concussions and the impact it has on the sport.

So that has not really been addressed here, and I hope that we will hear more about that. And I'm going to take a minute to review the minister's comments on this. And while I think it is an important area to actually have a position so we can have that discussion, hopefully he's landing on the right spot on that.

And I know that I don't have all the information I would like to have on this to feel confident in saying yea or nay. I understand there are commercial interests of course that drive this, partly because there is a lot of these things going on across the country in terms of UFC [Ultimate Fighting Championship] and in different . . . boxing or different kind of fight type of things. And I think that it's important that we have a good, frank discussion on that.

But is this the right way to go? That's something we'll have to determine. And we hope that it is, that the government is not creating a situation where there are unintended consequences, particularly when it comes to health.

And you know, we are dealing with a situation where, you know, as we do age more, and we have seniors and we have more and more seniors, that people are living longer, that in fact if there is an unintended consequence from creating this kind of athletics commission for professional contests or exhibitions, and what are the . . . We know what the intended consequences are: to regulate it. And the government's very clear, it's not to promote it. But the fact of the matter is that once you've opened the floodgates and we're going to have this kind of licensing, that it will happen. It will happen, and then it becomes an issue of safety. And that's really truly the issue here, isn't it? And it is one that we would like to hear more about, we would like to hear more about.

And I'm wondering, have they done a full set of consultations with everyone who could be connected to this? Obviously there are the people who are in the pro camp, those people who see a lot of value in this. And clearly they do, whether they're the different sport organizations or whether they're the sport tourism organizations who say, this kind of thing would be good for our cities and we could fill the hotels. We could fill the arenas. Fair enough, fair enough. But are we creating a situation that we might regret 10, 20, 30, 40 years down the road?

You know, I think that I find it interesting. And we all heard the news of the big, big Rogers contract last week and what might be the future of *Hockey Night in Canada*. And it is an interesting thing, you know, when you listen to . . . I listened to CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] radio on Sunday on the way down, people talking about what hockey meant to them in the good old days. It is a sport. I feel it's a sport. For many people though, for many people they feel it's entertainment and the game doesn't really start until the first fight starts. And I feel that's relatively . . . That's very sad. It's really sad, you know, because it's much more than that. There's so much skill

involved in hockey, and it's a great sport.

But what does it mean for smaller markets? What does it mean for cities like Saskatoon, was at one point hoping to land an NHL franchise. And now with these huge broadcasting rights and the package that came along with it, \$5.2 billion over 12 years, what does that mean? What does that mean?

And of course this is all kind of related to the same question: is it sport? Is it entertainment? Is it entertainment, and what are the limitations around that in terms of quality of life? We're promoting a certain thing, you know. It was interesting on Saturday, TSN [The Sports Network] had the 10 top hits, 10 top hits and they meant physical hits. And it was really interesting to see some of the brutal hits that hockey players were taking and some of the ones who were knocked out like Paul Kariya when he got hit, Eric Lindros. And they showed that video over and over again, and I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it, that hit. You know, but it ended or shortened a career, shortened a career.

And folks were saying, well it's part of the game. People should've known, people were aware of it. Yes but, you know, when you have such finesse players as Paul Kariya, you know, and others that you can go on and on. And I may be wandering a bit from the topic at hand when I'm talking about hockey and I should be talking about boxing, but boy, you know. What's that old joke? Went to a hockey game and a boxing match broke out, you know. And so this is, I don't know if it's a sad commentary or just a commentary on sport in our world now that we, on one hand, emulate skill and finesse and a bit of risk. A bit of risk, I think that's always part of sport.

[16:15]

But at the end of the day, you know, when you're watching Montreal and Toronto on Saturday night and Montreal was up 2-0 and of course then Toronto starts a fight, you know. And it sort of changes the gears, and you can see the people in the stands very happy about the fight, you know. But it does change the momentum, and we see that in junior hockey.

And I just have to say, when we're talking about sport and this kind of sport, then really I have some concerns. I have some concerns because how do you make sure that truly it is a sport?

And it is interesting that, and as I read the legislation, it talks about, you know, well it has definitions. And of course it does talk about, talks about professional athlete, person who participates as a contestant in a professional contest or exhibition. I mean, that's interesting because it doesn't really talk about what a . . . You know, I know what it means to a professional teacher, it talks about decision making, about being paid, that type of thing. So you're a professional athlete just because you sign up? That doesn't sound like a really well-thought-out . . . He's very aware of the decisions, the risks involved in the sport. I think that's kind of a different type of definition.

I was hoping that you would have a more fuller definition of what it means to be professional. Just somebody who participates — hmm, that's it. And a professional contest or exhibition means a contest or an exhibition of professional

boxing, mixed martial arts, or any other prescribed sport. So we were kind of leaving that open, and we'll have that in regulations. Maybe the next one will be hockey, you know. I just, I'm worried about where this may go. We need to know more information about this.

But the point I wanted to say was part II talks about how the commission is set up, you know:

Commission established

3(1) The Athletics Commission is established.

(2) The commission is to consist of an employee of the ministry who is to be appointed by the minister and who is to serve as chairperson of the commission.

So that becomes, in a sense, the commissioner. So is that going to be something that somebody's going to do off the side of their desk, or are they going to be quite actively involved? I would hope that in some ways that it could be someone who knows the area of the sport. So are now we going to create a position? And this is somewhat ironic that a government that is so keen about lean is setting up a commissioner. That's an interesting concept, that we're going to have a commissioner of sport here, a commissioner of the Athletics Commission. Either that person's going to do off the side of their desk, or are they going to be a full-time commissioner? I don't know.

Is it going to grow into being a full-time commissioner? And will that person be hired as an athletics commissioner? So we'll see the ad in the *Leader-Post*, *The StarPhoenix*, or *The Globe and Mail*: come to Saskatchewan and become the athletics commissioner for the province of Saskatchewan. That will be interesting, Mr. Speaker. And how do we rate that person? Is that person equivalent to an executive director, a deputy minister, or will we have to pay them some exorbitant wage because these people may be paying a lot of money in other provinces? We understand that seven other provinces have commissions, so what does a commissioner make in those provinces? Is that what we'll be paying our commissioner here?

When we see that discontent among, you know, public employees — and I'm thinking particularly of teachers — now will principals be comparing themselves to athletic commissioners? So I mean we're getting into some grey area here, but I think that this Act opens up a lot of questions about what road we might be going down when we start to do this. So we don't know, and we need a lot of questions about this, a lot of answers. We have the questions. There may be even more about this kind of thing.

So I am really curious about this though because when you start a new sport, and particularly when you get the government actively involved . . . And it may be an honourable thing and the right thing that we do have our foot in the door; we have our finger on the pulse because we have the commissioner working out of the ministry. But really, is this an appropriate thing? Will there be a conflict of interest because we're promoting the sport? We're promoting the sport. You know, will the government then, because it's got this high-priced commissioner, want to make sure that it actually succeeds? Or will there at some point have to say, you know what? We didn't do our due diligence. We jumped on a bandwagon, and we

should have got more information. This should have been more well thought out.

So it would be interesting to know if other commissioners actually work for the provinces or the municipalities, what kind of background do they have, or do they do it off the side of their desk? Now we often see this government does a lot of things off the side of their desk, and so maybe this might be just that kind of thing, you know, off the side of the desk. And then we'll see what happens from there.

So I think there's a huge responsibility for the commission and the commissioner, and I think this might have been the time where you wanted it to be arm's length. I think it would have been quite appropriate to have somebody who, from the government, be on the commission. That's reasonable. But to be the commissioner, I don't know. I think that's an interesting dilemma that we have.

So will they be responsible for promotion? I'm not sure. Will the government in effect become, you know . . . And it is interesting, you know. And I just found out that, you know, the NHL lawsuit now has grown to over 200 players are involved and had 10 players at the beginning.

So are we now opening up a lot of liability because the commissioner is an employee of the Government of Saskatchewan, and in a sense that we may be the ones who will be on a hook for future liability. Now I don't know if the government's thought that through. They should of probably had this commission be arm's length, but it's not arm's length because specifically it's a function of this government. And I mean, will they consider it to be an agency of the government? Is this another Crown corporation? It would be interesting to think of that as that, you know.

But the liability and all of that . . . you know because it does say, right, powers of the commission: issues licenses, events, and all of that in terms of this Act. Conduct any investigations and that type of thing. Collects data, conducts research, do the reports respecting professional boxing, martial arts, other prescribed sports, and what that might be, or professional contests or exhibitions and any other duties that may be designated by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. And do any other things the commission considers advisable or necessary for the purpose of carrying out the intent of this Act.

So you know, I do think that it is, this Act is something that is timely, though as I said, because there's a real pressure to deal with this. But is this as well thought out as it might be? I'm not sure. Because I can just tell you, I've been thinking a lot about this, particularly when it comes to concussions and the emphasis on violence in sport and how does that play out. Because we know that while there's some . . . And I have to tell you that boxing in so many ways can be a fine sport, but when it gets to . . . in a very unprofessional way. And this is what alarms me about this definition, it doesn't define professional. It just says whoever shows up is a professional. I think there should be a little bit more to it than that. You know, you sign up or you participate in an event and all of sudden you're a professional boxer? That doesn't make sense. You know I think you need a little more rigour than that. So maybe, maybe there's more to this than meets the eye, but it should really be in these

documents that we're examining today.

So I want to take a minute to take a look at what the minister had said about this. And this goes back to November 18th, and he introduced this. And I know that there were in fact many people, in fact I think the day before, a couple of days before, he had people who were in the audience, in the gallery who were interested in this. And I can understand that they're keen to see this move forward. I know that this was back on November 5th when people came to see and support the creation of a provincial athletics commission to oversee professional boxing and mixed martial arts events here in the province.

And I'm just reviewing the minister's introduction, and he talks about Pat Fiacco, former mayor of Regina and currently the CEO of Tourism Saskatchewan. And he is the current president of Boxing Canada. And I know he's an outstanding referee and he's travelled around the world. And he seems to be able to bring that . . . You know, it's a physical toughness. It's a mental toughness. And I think Pat Fiacco embodies all of that. And I've seen that. But there's also the sense of fairness, a sense of sportsmanship, and so you know, it's good to see that he's involved.

There was Anthony Scales, head of . . . Brazilian jiu-jitsu instructor and co-owner of the Complete Martial Arts and Fitness in Regina. Other folks were here as well. Malcolm Eaton, mayor of the city of Humboldt, was here and I understand representing SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]; and Randy Fernets, who I know quite well, director of industry development and sports tourism for Tourism Saskatoon. And so they were here, and they were wanting to see the introduction of this bill. So clearly the sports side has been, and tourism side has been consulted.

But I don't know if they had invited the folks from the acquired brain injury group to have a conversation about allaying any fears or concerns they might have. I think that's very clear that we have to make sure that when we are promoting . . . or regulating — and I know the minister is very clear — it's not promoting. But when you're regulating, and it's out there, you know, and taking it out from the underground, which is a good thing, bringing it from the underground . . . Because then it is clearly even more dangerous. But I think we needed to . . . The government really should have cast its net further in terms of the consultations.

It's so clear that, you know, in a world where you can have a \$5.2 billion media package for 12 years for one sport that kids are watching, families are watching, but then this ugly side comes out. And I would really hope that we can do a very good job here. But I have to tell you that, you know, even when my son watches some of these fights on TV I go, I can't believe what we're watching here. This is not sport. But this is I guess just many . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well just because you say it's a sport doesn't make it a sport. And it's like professional boxing. Just because you're a boxer doesn't mean you're a professional boxer. You're a boxer. And I think we need to pay more attention to this. We need to pay more attention.

And I think that if in our province we do this well — and I think

we can do it well — that's a good thing. But if we do it poorly and we do it off the side of our desk, it doesn't help anybody. It doesn't help anybody at all.

But I want to just review some of the things that the minister talked about. And you know, he talked about how it's a new Act respecting the Athletics Commission, professional boxing, mixed martial arts and exhibitions and other things. And we're one of the only three provinces that haven't taken the necessary steps to sanction the professional combative sports events.

And I know this government is not alone, is not worried about . . . You know, I mean I always find it interesting when they bring up, we're going to be the last, or we want to be the first, and they seem to be really inconsistent. But today it seems that they don't want to be the last one to have an athletics commission. I think the problem is though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we want to do it well. We want to do it well. So we have a lot of information from the other seven provinces, and that's what we're really curious to know. And I'm hoping that the minister can share that with us.

[16:30]

And the one area that I really do have some questions about is the role and function of the commissioner. When the minister says it's going to be an employee, is it going to be like the person who inspects the elevators? You just sign, and he's very silent. You never see the person who inspects the elevators, and you have that little card up on the elevator. Is that the kind of role that person is? Or is it going to be a very public person? A very public person, and one that may have come out from the . . . up through the ranks in say boxing and understands what it means to be a professional boxer, what it means to have trained, what it means to have the different levels of fights. Or is it going to be a bureaucrat, as I said, who may sign those inspection certificates, and you never see them again? So I'm curious about that.

So one of only three provinces that haven't taken the necessary steps to sanction professional combative sports. And they're concerned that many of these . . . what's driving this is, in fact, that there's been many unsanctioned events and they hold them without appropriate standards or safety precautions that help protect participants and spectators. And I think that's a huge concern. And we often raise this issue around safety, and of course this would fall into that whole issue around occupational health and safety. And I think that's a really critical, critical concern.

And as I've talked about the fact that we've seen this both in the NFL and the NHL where the NFL had a very . . . the players had a very successful lawsuit around concussions and safety. And we're not sure if that's the end of it and that's all, but that involved I believe several hundred million. I'm not sure of the number off the top of my head, but it was several hundred million, and how that was divided up amongst the players and ensuring that actually concussions are taken seriously. So if this is part of this, this is huge. This is huge.

And if we can grow from the previous experience of the previous seven provinces and their rules and their regulations, that'll be some of the questions we will want to know. And as I

said, it's not just a matter of doing it off the side of the desk but really, really benefiting from the seven provinces and what they've done to protect participants and also spectators.

Now it's interesting to include spectators. We don't often think of spectators, and I'd be curious to know what kind of dangers spectators would find themselves at these kind of exhibitions or events that would be different than a regular hockey game or a baseball game or a basketball game. I know sometimes particularly hockey fans can get out of hand. Maybe that they're thinking along those lines already, anticipating that fans will get too, too engaged.

Now I've not been to any of these kind of events, so I don't know what fans do at these kind of events. Maybe they really get into it and it's a dangerous thing, and how they're going to protect the fans from the professional participants or how the participants are going to be protected from the professional fans. Now I don't know. This'll be the question.

An Hon. Member: — Proof is in the pudding.

Mr. Forbes: — Proof is in the pudding. But that could be a dangerous thing. That could be a dangerous thing. This proof could be dangerous. I appreciate the engagement because I think this is what we should . . . this kind of debate. And so proof will be in the pudding. But I think it will be a danger, could be potentially a dangerous thing.

I'm not sure I want to be one of those fans who will be experimenting and going to one of these events just to see how it goes. I think that . . . I don't know if I'll be up for that. Definitely, I will not be one of those participants. I would not recommend myself as a professional boxer or anything that would say . . . Yes, I might be talked into watching, but I don't know about them.

But he goes on to say this legislation is not about promoting mixed martial art as a sport, but as regulating it, and as regulating this sport, we help eliminate fights putting athletes, in some cases, children at risk. So I'm curious about that, that statement there about children. Are we talking about . . . Now I do think that he refers to an age limit in this. Now maybe I'm not sure what the . . . if there is an age limit. So that'll be again another question because he does talk about children and what that means and what we see in that area and what kind of . . . particularly if there will be a lot of research done on that.

And again it will be growing from the experience of the other seven provinces. Do they have age limits? And what does that mean? And again, I don't know if this is discriminatory in terms of youth and older, but I think the . . . This is one that will be interesting to do this.

And it would be interesting to know, Mr. Speaker, how many illegal fights? What has been the trend here in Saskatchewan around illegal fights, you know? And so what . . . Has this been really a problem here in the province? How many fights have there been? What's been the situation behind them? Is it something that the police are calling about and saying, listen, we've got to, we've got to do something about this. There's just too many fights on the weekend. I mean I know there are fights on the weekend, but whether they're this kind of fight, I don't

know. But this is the question we have.

You know, I live just off of Idylwyld and I know right across the street, in the bars across the street, there's the odd fight. Now I don't know if we're talking about that kind of fight . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I only hear about them and I don't go out there to check. Again as a spectator, it's not wise to go out after midnight to check out what's happening in the parking lot across the street. But, Mr. Speaker, I hope we're not mixing up apples and oranges in terms of illegal fights here. But again, it's important.

So he talks about the Criminal Code and legalizing the sport of mixed martial arts across Canada and that there has to be some sort of provincial athletics commission or similar established body. And that's important. And so that we have the vehicle and we can do it now, and that's really clear. So there's some clarity and an opportunity to put this forward and make sure. And again the minister keeps coming back to this point that we don't have participants put at risk for serious injuries.

Again this would be the case where I would like to know how much . . . How many fights are there? What kind of situation are we having? I think it is an important discussion to have just because I know that there is a real presence. And we hear, and people talk about . . . And as I said, we do get lobbied about this an awful lot. But I think that it's one that I would like . . . And I hope the minister . . . I know sometimes they keep track of some of our questions, and I hope the minister would be prepared to answer that question about how many illegal fights because he's referring to it a few times, this illegal activity. So could he describe that illegal activity?

You know, sometimes we come to committee meetings and the officials are often very prepared, very prepared and can answer any question, but sometimes they're not ready for questions. And I think one question I would hope that we'll be asking is to describe the illegal activity that's happening in Saskatchewan, whether it's illegal fights, that type of thing. What's really the context, the environment that we're really creating here, and how much of this . . . You know, it'd be interesting to know how much of this professional sport is already in existence in Saskatchewan and is waiting for a venue to happen, but in fact have to travel to other provinces to do their sport, and what kind of things we're missing. So there's a lot of, there's a lot of solid questions that we'll have to get some answers to.

So he goes on, Mr. Speaker, and he talks about three main reasons that he's talked about. And the first is, the government is committed to establish a provincial athletics commission and will be able to design to . . . "This commission will be designed to ensure a consistent standard of qualifications, rules, regulations, and safety protocols for all participants and officials across the province."

Now he'd also talked about earlier protecting participants, spectators. So I don't know if he's just neglected that one in the first reason, but I think that we'll be making that connection for him because he did say, and I don't know if it's in the Act, about protecting spectators. I don't see right off the top of . . . And so we'll definitely have to find out more about that. I think that's an important, very critical part.

He also talks about ensuring “. . . that competitors participate in appropriate pre-fight medical testing such as blood tests, concussion screening, and eye exams . . . [and ensuring] that qualified medical staff and event officials are hired, that promoters and competitors have the proper licences, and that promoters have suitable liability insurance.”

And that’s hugely important, especially that last part about liability insurance, and hopefully that that is the kind of liability insurance that has fair access. I don’t know if I want to use the word easily access but fair access for injuries such as concussion, that because of the limitations of the definition of professional athlete, that you’re essentially just a participant. And I think that should be stronger. I mean it talks about qualified medical staff. You would think that you would have qualified competitors so that you’re not having competitors who really shouldn’t be in the fight fighting, but there’s some level of that.

Now he does go on in reason three, talks about “. . . will also be responsible for tracking competitors’ fighting histories and ensuring safety protocols are enforced.” So there will be five . . . So that’s again about the closest that we get to any sort of professional standing. Or who are these athletes and what are they . . . Are they just . . . You know, we keep track of their histories, and that’s a good thing so if there is potential for concussions and repeat concussions, that that’s happening. Now it will be interesting to know if this is part of a national tracking system so that fighters across the country are in the same database. Is that the plan? Which I think would be a reasonable plan. So that if you’ve had two or three concussions in this province, that they would know about that in Ontario. And likewise, if you’ve had a serious concussion in Ontario and you’ve come out here to fight, that in fact that we’re aware of that as well. So you know, I think this is all very interesting and I think this is something that we should be debating.

And I just want to go on to . . . He talks about five of the seven provinces that regulate professional MMA, mixed martial arts events, have provincial commissions. And from speaking with these other provinces, we know that that tends to be the most effective governance model. So fair enough. There’s benefits: consistency, rules, regulations, processes across the province. And that’s fair. I think that’s a good idea. You would not want to have a situation where, you know, tough rules in Regina or Saskatoon, then you go up to La Ronge and it’s the wild, wild west up north. That would not be a good thing. I think that you want to have it consistent right across the province, right across the province. And this is important stuff. Okay. So just to be clear on that, I think that makes a lot of sense.

[16:45]

What I’m looking for is a sense of how will this work in terms of again this commissioner. And I’ve talked about that at length, and I’m going to be very interested when we get a chance to meet with the minister and talk more about this in committee about, is this commissioner somebody who is stand-alone, you know, a specific employee dedicated to mixed martial arts and boxing? Or will he be doing it off the side of their desk? Again will it be the kind of thing you sign a certificate like you see in the elevator, or a very prominent commissioner that you might see like the CFL [Canadian

Football League], where you’re out doing interviews and talking a lot about the sport and in fact promoting the sport? Now the minister’s been very clear that this is not about promoting the sport but it’s about regulating it. And I think that’s a good point. That’s a very good point, a valid point, and that the safety element is huge, huge.

But I need to say that there is a lot of questions about this, and particularly when we’ve seen what’s happening in other sports that are actually not as combative but at many times are, and that’s hockey and football.

And as I was saying earlier, when I saw the TSN’s top 10 hits, they were pretty major hits. And I would not want to be on the other side of those hits, that’s for sure, and how they can be, in a sport that’s as well regulated as hockey, it can be so very, very dangerous. And we’re seeing that where I was talking earlier about this lawsuit that started out with 10, and that now I understand it’s over 200 players. And this is a big, big deal. People are saying, you know, athletes are saying, I’m in it for the game. I’m in it for the sport. But I also have the rest of my life to live, and I don’t want to live with a concussion for the rest of my life, you know. The career of an athlete is short enough, and you don’t want it to be shortened by injuries that could have been prevented.

And so this is something we’re going to be watching very carefully. And we understand that there are some very compelling reasons for moving forward with this. Obviously the Criminal Code has been amended to allow this to happen. And there are interests, whether it be tourism, that . . . And I understand it, tourism. We saw that with the Grey Cup, what a huge economic impact it had on the city and on the province. And in a much smaller way, this kind of thing could have, might have an impact in our cities as well.

And it has definitely got a fan base. And people are very interested in it and want to see more of it. And they want to see it in our towns and in our cities. But I also know that there has to be more to it than that, and there has to be more due diligence than just saying, hey we can make a bit of money at this. We need to make sure that it’s done in the right way, the best way.

So I know that my colleagues here will want to have an opportunity to speak to this bill and other bills before us. But as I said, I’ll be looking forward to the spring when this goes to committee, that we’ll be talking more about this and finding out a lot more about what the impacts are for this.

So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of Bill No. 108, *An Act respecting the Athletics Commission and Professional Contests or Exhibitions*. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate of Bill No. 108, *The Athletics Commission Act*.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill 102

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 102 — *The Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill 102, *The Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2013*. And I give some opening comments about this legislation that, I guess some changes of legislation that's coming forward. And you know it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, and we talk a process about making sure government does its due diligence when it comes to making sure individuals that would be impacted by legislation. And I've talked about that earlier and I think it's important, and many of my colleagues have said that.

There's sometimes maybe government and ourselves and individuals want to make sure, and we on our side are always arguing the point that make sure we have meaningful consultation, the process is done right. Whether you go out to the communities and those individuals that are going to be impacted by legislation, you sit down, you listen to their concerns and I guess their ideas, and sometimes . . . We know we have a lot of hard-working people in our province who do a great job and who have the expertise and the knowledge to give us good input and insight onto some of the legislation that are being asked by organizations, by individuals.

But those individuals have a right to share their views and their concerns. And they don't have a government that doesn't respect . . . and a meaningful dialogue with them about impacts in legislation that will impact, whether it's a municipality, whether it's a First Nations community, whether it's the urban centres, rural, North. Individuals have a right, organizations have a right to be consulted in meaningful . . .

And I think about our trappers. I think about First Nations. There are many groups that feel like, yes, government, we ask you to pass legislation and bringing the legislation forward that protects, I guess, Saskatchewan residents. And some of the legislation that's brought forward, Mr. Speaker, it's clear. It's good legislation. And we've said that. Sometimes we've worked in co-operation with government to bring legislation. And we do. We work together and work with organizations to say, yes, on both sides. We meet with them. We find out that it's a good piece of legislation. It makes sense. It's something that will protect the Saskatchewan residents. It's somebody that will do some good for an industry. Then we say, yes, it makes good common sense. Let's support that.

And I think at the end of the day, that's what we're here to do. We're all elected to make sure we carry on the business and protect Saskatchewan residents.

But having said that, the track record of the current government hasn't been too great when it comes to the duty to consult and accommodate. And that is a sad reality. And I've looked at that and I've mentioned it in this House about the way the new provincial park came to be. There's a process. And when you have letters coming in from First Nations like La Ronge Indian

Band clearly stating their concern, they do not support this. But the government says, but you know what? In 2007 we made a campaign promise and we said we would have two more parks, provincial parks. So you know what? We don't really care who doesn't like it. We're going to go ahead and do it.

Now if that's what you call, oh, well, we met with some of the groups, the Aboriginal groups, some of the Métis and First Nations, and they're happy with what we're doing. Well it's sad to say when you have letters, correspondence coming in and you see letters saying the way — that I received and I know the minister did receive and the ministry should have had at its fingers — about the way a group was not happy with the process of consultation. And when you have a group that's saying they're concerned about land that's their traditional territory that you're going to impact by legislation, by a new provincial park, and you go ahead on that when you have the letter, you have the concerns raised by a band, where it's their traditional territory . . .

And let's talk about respect. And that's sad when you see a government move forward to carry on in a way, and it wasn't very . . . As far as I see it, if we're going to go through meaningful consultation, it wasn't very respectful to the First Nations. And it's their traditional territory. And sometimes I wonder. We talk about the Supreme Court and rulings that come down and, you know, the duty to consult and accommodate Canada's Aboriginal people. It's very clear. But I would think the government would also take the same protection whether it was a rural area, whether it was an organization. And unfortunately this government has a track record and, I'm being very clear, it isn't too great when it comes to the process, whether it's labour legislation that they brought in.

Oh, they talk about all the processes and how many people come forward to share their ideas, and we find out later it isn't so. It isn't so. It wasn't as many people as we find out. I mean, you can say we consulted. Well did you consult three, four, twelve organizations? I can sit here and say that at the end of the day, we're talking about meaningful consultation. We're making sure that those individuals being impacted . . .

And I know some of the ministers will go out and say that, and I've seen some of the challenges in northern Saskatchewan and the way some of the ministers have handled the process up there — after the fact. And they're changing policies and regulations, rules, then they talk about, oh well, we'll go out and meet with the residents and some of the leaders. And truly, it isn't what's needed.

So having said that, having said that clearly, I'm going to go back and talk about some of the changes that are proposed in here. And the legislation that we're talking about, Bill 102, didn't take in land surveyors. When an organization or a company does work on a piece of property, they want to make sure they get paid. Whether you're doing the construction, there's different things that you do. You can put a lien on a property that gives you protection that you'll get paid. If you're not being paid, then there's a lien against that property and that covers it for a time.

And in here it talks about now land surveyors, on the request of

them, and I know some of my colleagues met with some of them when they were here a week ago or so, maybe two weeks ago. And members of this side got to talk to them and it's something that would give them some more protection. So that's a good thing, and the government did that part because it was requested by them. It's a good thing. We agree it makes sense to include them with other groups that are in there to give them that protection, and if that's easy to do — a change, an amendment to the legislation — well that's great and that's good.

It also increases from one year to two years. There's a provision in here that will give a two-year instead of a one-year window. There's also taken out of here, from what I can get out of it, where it used to be 1,000 plus a 1 per cent, they are now going to the 1 per cent, using that when it comes to the contracts. So they have made some changes. They're small changes that they have made, but if it protects one of the organizations that have raised the concern, that is obviously a good thing.

So I know to cover the rest of the evening's things that people have to go to, and I know my colleagues have a lot more discussions on this and in committee when it goes to committee they will ask more questions and we have had a chance to consult with individuals, so at this point, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to adjourn debate on Bill 102.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 102, *The Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall	4357
Brotten	4357
Morgan	4357
Forbes	4357
Norris	4357
McCall	4358
Ross	4358
Hart	4358
Wotherspoon	4358
Sproule	4358
Tell	4358
Bjornerud	4359

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Forbes	4359
Vermette	4359
McCall	4359

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Support for Potash Workers

Brotten	4359
---------------	------

Hopes for a Peaceful Resolution in Ukraine

Krawetz	4360
---------------	------

Hip-Hop Artist Targets Bullying

Wotherspoon	4360
-------------------	------

Saskatchewan Curlers at Olympic Trials

Moe	4360
-----------	------

Regina Business Celebrates 60 Years

Ross	4361
------------	------

Honours for Saskatchewan Physician

Doherty	4361
---------------	------

International Day of Persons With Disabilities

Docherty	4361
----------------	------

QUESTION PERIOD

Provision of Firefighting Services

Brotten	4361
---------------	------

Wall	4362
------------	------

Labour Market Agreements with the Federal Government

Wotherspoon	4363
-------------------	------

Boyd	4363
------------	------

Mental Health Services

Chartier	4364
----------------	------

Duncan	4364
--------------	------

Design of Children’s Hospital

Brotten	4365
---------------	------

Duncan	4365
--------------	------

Wall	4366
------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 127 — *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013*

Duncan	4366
--------------	------

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on the Economy

Toth	4367
------------	------

Standing Committee on Human Services

Kirsch	4367
--------------	------

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Brkich	4367
--------------	------

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Michelson	4367
-----------------	------

Standing Committee on House Services

McCall	4367
--------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Ottenbreit	4368
GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
COMMITTEE OF FINANCE	
Motions for Supply	
Krawetz.....	4368
FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF RESOLUTIONS	
Krawetz.....	4368
APPROPRIATION BILL	
Bill No. 131 — <i>The Appropriation Act, 2013 (No. 2)</i>	
Krawetz.....	4368
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 126 — <i>The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)</i>	
Harrison.....	4369
Belanger.....	4370
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 121 — <i>The Election Amendment Act, 2013</i>	
McCall	4372
Harrison (referral to committee).....	4374
Bill No. 107 — <i>The Wildfire Act</i>	
Sproule.....	4375
Harrison (referral to committee).....	4378
Bill No. 111 — <i>The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013</i>	
Chartier	4378
Harrison (referral to committee).....	4380
Bill No. 112 — <i>The Accounting Profession Act</i>	
Wotherspoon	4380
Harrison (referral to committee).....	4381
Bill No. 109 — <i>The Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Amendment Act, 2013</i>	
McCall	4381
Bill No. 108 — <i>The Athletics Commission Act</i>	
Forbes	4382
Bill No. 102 — <i>The Builders' Lien Amendment Act, 2013</i>	
Vermette	4388
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY ON BILLS	
Bill No. 121 — <i>The Election Amendment Act, 2013</i>	4374
FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS	
Bill No. 121 — <i>The Election Amendment Act, 2013</i>	
Harrison.....	4374
THIRD READINGS	
Bill No. 121 — <i>The Election Amendment Act, 2013</i>	
Harrison.....	4375

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