



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

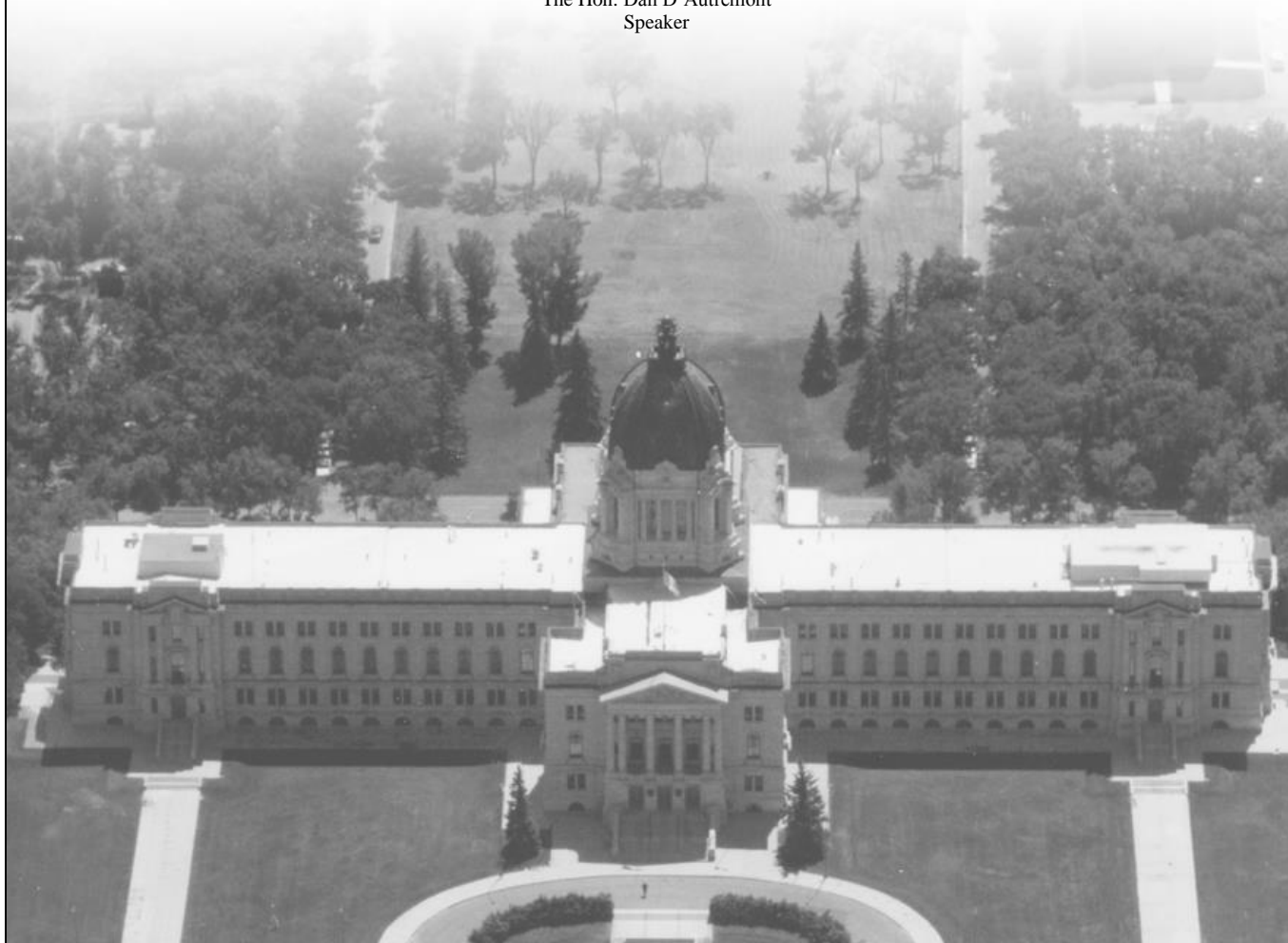
of the

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]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introduction of Pages

The Speaker: — I would like to introduce to the House some new Pages. Sarah Cheshire and Breanna Goertzen will be returning as Pages for this session.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Shellbrook.

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Legislative Assembly, I would like to take a moment here this morning to introduce my Saskatchewan legislative intern, Ms. Taylor-Anne Yee. Taylor and I have had the opportunity to have a few good discussions on — surprise, surprise — agriculture and our sustainable production and export system that we have here in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I also have gained great respect for Taylor, with the level of time and expertise as a young lady that she's able to give back to her community.

Mr. Speaker, she's been very involved with the Open Door Society as well as been a homework helper, the Hands On Street Ministries as well as the Women of the Legislature program. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join me in welcoming Ms. Taylor-Anne Yee to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, it's my pleasure to introduce Ms. Kaytlyn Criddle. I've had the privilege to be working with Kaytlyn as part of her experience with the Saskatchewan legislative internship program.

I'd like to introduce some of Kaytlyn's background, her interests, her experiences, her education. She graduated with distinction from the University of Regina with a bachelor degree in anthropology. She is a tremendous athlete. She competed with the Cougar track and field as well as cross-country teams and was named academic all-Canadian for her athletic and academic accomplishments.

She's a competitive ringette player, avid runner, and she's also supported youth in the city at Albert School with an after-school program. Kaytlyn has had significant international experiences, including building a school in Kenya. She studied indigenous development initiatives in the Brazilian Amazon. She's researched food security and worked directly with women farmers in Ghana. She's done a lot of really remarkable work.

It's been my privilege to work with Kaytlyn in this short period in the legislative internship program. She's been highly interested in connecting with community. She's been involved

in going out to community meetings. She's been part of developing a community petition drive. She's had meetings as it relates to education with stakeholders that are interested. She's toured schools along with me, teachers, students, and parents. She's toured and met with the Autism Resource Centre and First Steps Wellness. She's attended community celebrations. She's laced up her blades and assisted with the Rosemont Outdoor Hockey League. She's a good skater, Mr. Speaker. She's participated in community office meetings. She's done great research in areas of pensions and our finances. Quite simply, it's been a privilege to work with Kaytlyn.

On top of all the other work she's done as a Legislative intern, her own research as well, what I see in Kaytlyn is someone with exceptional abilities and someone with a bright, exciting future ahead of her. So I ask all members in this Assembly to give a warm welcome to Ms. Kaytlyn Criddle.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce a young fellow who's been working with me as an intern, Dipo Ziwa. Now Dipo was originally born in Zambia and then he went, their family moved to Alberta, but he's been in Regina since 1995.

Dipo is a great person, and he's presently in his fourth year at the U of R [University of Regina] here in Regina. He's doing, taking, majoring in human justice, and he will be pursuing a master's degree in human justice and then going into law school. So we won't hold that against him if he wants to become a lawyer, Mr. Speaker, but he's, like I said, he's a great person.

He came up to Carrot River and went through our community and was absolutely amazed at the amount of trees that we actually have up there, which is a lot different than southern Saskatchewan where trees, you know, aren't really a big thing. We also went out sledding, Mr. Speaker, and he really enjoyed going out on the snow toboggans and seeing the great tourist attractions that we have in northeastern Saskatchewan. He was also quite amazed at all the small businesses there are throughout the whole community and the lumber mills. We were very fortunate to be able to tour the Weyerhaeuser mill in Hudson Bay and see a lot of the various things that are going on in what I consider some of the nicest spots in all of Canada, actually in all of the world.

So I want everyone to welcome Dipo to his legislation Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature, it's my pleasure to introduce my intern with the Saskatchewan legislative internship program, Mr. Dustan Hlady. Dustan was born in Alberta, but we will not hold that against him. He is firmly entrenched here in Saskatchewan now at this point of time. Mr.

Hlady is an accomplished musician and an accomplished writer. As a matter of fact, he won a writing contest last week that he was telling me about.

Dustan has finished a Bachelor of Arts in humanities from Briercrest College and is working on an education degree. We've had an opportunity to do some work together in the past month or six weeks or so, and I've enjoyed the work that he's already done for me. And he visited actually Saskatoon Riversdale last week, which was his first visit to the constituency.

I look forward to getting him there a couple more times over the course of the next month or so, but I would like to ask all members to welcome Mr. Dustan Hlady to his Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, there are two gentlemen representing the Leading Influence Ministries. They are Tim Schindel from Victoria and Barry Berglund from Saskatoon. Tim is the one with the yellow tie. Barry and I go back a little bit in our media days together. He worked with me, then he worked against me and then, at the end, we kind of worked together. He's now taken on a new leadership role with the Leading Influence Ministries.

Mr. Speaker, Leading Influence Ministries has been established in BC [British Columbia] and in Alberta in providing spiritual encouragement and support for members of the Legislative Assembly. They're in the process of establishing their ministry here in Saskatchewan and will be contacting many of the members, I'm sure, and introducing the ministry and talking to them about it. So we will probably see more of them in the days to come. I wish them well in all their new endeavours and ask all members to welcome Tim Schindel and Barry Berglund.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this House, I'd like to introduce some members of the SEIU, Service Employees International Union. Members are up in the east gallery. And of course we know these folks are very interested on the activities of this province, this government. They're an integral part of our health care system; they serve the people of Saskatchewan well. And of course when the government makes some decisions and takes certain courses of action, they want to make sure their voice is heard loud and clear. And so today we have some petitions and, of course, they're very interested in Bill 128 as well.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members . . . Or I should tell you, Mr. Speaker, we have today with us Linda Zemluk, Dorothy Turgeon, Lou-Ellen Murray, Celeste Dixon, Dannel Pickering, Esther Dupperon, and Tom Howe. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join

with the member opposite and with all members in welcoming the individuals from SEIU to the legislature today. We're always glad to see people participating in the democratic process. As the member opposite indicated, we will be dealing with issues regarding the employment Act later on in the day, and we'll have comments made. But I would like to thank them for the very good work that they continue to do in our province ensuring that our citizens are kept healthy and safe.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce, in the west gallery, Bill Gowen, one of my constituents who is down in Regina for purposes of having attended at Telemiracle this last weekend. He brought with him his brother who is a challenged individual from Yorkton who had done a fundraiser in Yorkton, I think raised something in excess of several thousand dollars for Telemiracle. So I'd like to have all members welcome Mr. Gowen to the gallery to his legislature today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, seated in the east gallery, I recognize a couple individuals seated up in the far benches there. I'd like to welcome to the Assembly here today Mr. Chris Gardiner, along with Shannon Berard-Gardiner. And they're interested in the proceedings here today, and they're interested in some initiatives and progress with government on a file that's important to them. They also have a tremendous amount of love and care for their adult son Matthew, and it's my pleasure to welcome these two individuals to their Assembly here today. I ask all members to join me in doing so. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly, it's my privilege to introduce in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a friend and a former colleague, Audrey Trombley. Audrey was a long-time career administrator for the rural municipality of Griffin. She's also former president of the Rural Municipal Administrators' Association of Saskatchewan, at which time I had the privilege of serving as her vice-president, Mr. Speaker. She's retired from municipal work now, but her days in public service aren't over. She's now a board member with the South East Cornerstone School Division. She was here for a meeting this morning which I had the opportunity, along with the Minister of Health, to be at. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like all the members to please welcome Audrey to her Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'd just simply like to join with the minister opposite in welcoming Ms. Audrey Trombley to her Assembly and thanking her for her life of service to the province of Saskatchewan in capacities with rural municipalities and now continuing on with our school divisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition today against Saskatchewan health care laundry privatization. And we know that in May 2013, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its plan to privatize health care laundry in Saskatchewan, handing it over to a for-profit, Alberta-based corporation, K-Bro Linen, and that as a result of the decision to privatize health care laundry, six non-profit health care laundry facilities will be closed within two years in the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Regina, and Saskatoon.

And that the privatization of health care laundry will mean the devastating loss of over 300 good-paying jobs, devastating local economies and families, and that the privatization of health care laundry will take money out of Saskatchewan's health care system to instead be used to boost the profits of an Alberta-based corporation; that the privatization of health care laundry will put patient care at risk as health regions lose direct control over health care laundry services; and that privatization of health care laundry will mean that fair-wage jobs will be replaced with poverty wages and public accountability will be lost.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly be pleased to cause the government to reverse the misguided decision to privatize Saskatchewan's health care laundry which will result in the devastating loss of over 300 jobs in the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Regina, and Saskatoon.

And moreover, the privatization of health care laundry will misuse vital taxpayers' dollars by taking money out of Saskatchewan's health care system to boost the profits of an Alberta-based corporation and lose direct control over laundry, and thereby will have significantly reduced ability to quickly and effectively respond to infectious outbreaks in health care facilities.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Weyburn, Estevan, Yellow Grass, Pangman, Goodwater, Stoughton, Radville, Midale, Halbrite, and McTaggart.

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

[13:45]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the management reporting of our province's public finances. People find that it's unacceptable that this government failed an audit, the first of its kind in Canadian history, and have done nothing to fix the books, Mr. Speaker. Quite simply, they believe they deserve books they can trust. We believe they deserve nothing short of that.

The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party government to provide Saskatchewan people with the fair, true state of our finances by providing appropriate summary financial accounting, reporting that is in line with the rest of Canada, in compliance with public sector accounting standards and following the independent Provincial Auditor's recommendations; and also to begin to provide responsible, sustainable, and trustworthy financial management as deserved by Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned residents from Regina. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of replacing the gym at Sacred Heart Community School. Mr. Speaker, we're coming up on a year since that gymnasium at Sacred Heart was closed on an emergency basis, and the petitioners here point out the following. The school and the community have raised this issue with the Sask Party provincial government since 2007 without satisfactory resolution. They point out the fact that any school needs a gym as a place for the school and the community to gather together to engage in cultural and educational activities and to promote physical activity, which is good for the mind, body, and spirit of all children.

They point out the fact that the gym at Sacred Heart has played an important role in the school's efforts to become a literacy leader, having served as a gathering place for the very successful reading assemblies and reading nights. They point out that 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 students over the past four years and that attendance and learning outcomes are steadily improving. And they point out, as a matter of basic fairness and common sense, Sacred Heart Community School needs a gym.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly 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 citizens from Birch Hills, Swift Current, and Yorkton. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Support for People of the Ukraine

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

recent events in the Ukraine have resulted in great turmoil for that nation. As a Ukrainian Canadian, I am shocked and deeply saddened by the violence committed against the people of Ukraine, and by the loss of life.

However, I am hopeful. We are all hopeful that with continued efforts, Ukraine can move forward on the path to freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Our government has been working closely with the Saskatchewan Ukrainian community, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and the Government of Canada to support Ukraine in the resolution of this conflict.

Mr. Speaker, on January the 29th of this year, our Deputy Premier wrote to Minister Baird in support of the federal government's effort to promote democratic values in Ukraine. As well, our Premier issued a statement on February 19 condemning the violence and expressing thoughts and condolences for those killed and injured. And recently, the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Regina Dewdney, along with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, raised a flag in support of Ukraine at our legislature. And a few days later the member spoke at the rally attended by dozens of people calling for freedom in Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, Ukraine remains very important to Saskatchewan. Over 130,000 people of Ukrainian heritage reside here and over 320 new residents arrived in 2013. As well, Mr. Speaker, we have important trade relationships between Saskatchewan and Ukraine. We are committed, Mr. Speaker, to continue working with the federal government and the Ukrainian Canadian community to advance the cause of freedom, prosperity, and democracy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I know many of us are following closely the volatile situation in Ukraine. We are troubled and appalled by the violent and brutal acts we witnessed in Ukraine over the last weeks, and we are deeply concerned about the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation in the last several days.

Mr. Speaker, Ukraine needs and deserves our support. So I rise today in this Assembly to clearly say that we stand in support of a free and democratic Ukraine where freedom of expression and the rule of law are guaranteed. We condemn in the strongest possible terms any action that could lead to an escalation in tensions or to more violence. We call on all sides to respect international law and to respect Ukraine's territorial sovereignty. And we urge the Canadian government to play a leadership role in working for a peaceful resolution to this troubling situation.

The people of Ukraine and Ukrainians around the world have demonstrated time and time again just how resilient and courageous they are — always refusing to give up, never letting their spirits be broken, and always pushing for a better and brighter future. Mr. Speaker, I join Ukrainians the world over and right here in Saskatchewan in praying for peace and working for that better tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

38th Annual Telemiracle

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Saturday and Sunday another successful Kinsmen Telemiracle was held in Regina. And Telemiracle 38 did not disappoint. The phones were ringing off the hook and Kinsmen Telemiracle raised a grand total of \$5,285,744, again demonstrating the tremendous spirit of generosity that exists within our fine province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this year some of our very own members participated in Telemiracle 38. The member from Regina Dewdney, Regina Coronation Park, Regina Walsh Acres, and myself all answered phones at this event.

This year's Telemiracle's great cast consisted of Bob McGrath, Brad Johner and the Johner Boys, Beverley Mahood, Andrea Menard, and Donny Parenteau. The event also had a large list of great Saskatchewan performers and entertainers.

Mr. Speaker, no matter how large or how small the donation, all contributions to Telemiracle and the Kinsmen Foundation are greatly appreciated. These funds go a long way in supporting those that require special assistance assessing medical treatment within our province, with all the money raised and staying here in Saskatchewan.

I would like all members to join me in thanking all of the volunteers for their efforts and congratulations to the organizers of the 38th annual Telemiracle. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Regina this weekend, Telemiracle, the Kinsmen Foundation held their 38th annual fundraiser. The event brought people from across Saskatchewan together to raise money for those struggling with mental and physical disabilities. Telemiracle has been hosting on-air events to raise money to meet the medical needs of Saskatchewan people since 1977. Their first telethon was held in the Centennial Auditorium in Saskatoon and raised nearly \$1 million in its very first year.

Saskatchewan is a generous province, and I am pleased that we have again demonstrated our support for Telemiracle's initiatives. This weekend's event raised almost \$5.3 million in its annual 20-hour telethon. The event got under way at Regina's Conexus Arts Centre on Saturday night and finished at 5 p.m. on Sunday.

The funds raised, Mr. Speaker, will help assist families with medical expenses, equipment, and travel costs. In recent years, money raised has also been donated to children's hospitals and the Wascana Rehab Centre to help with equipment upgrades. After 38 years, the partnership between Telemiracle and Saskatchewan citizens has raised over \$100 million.

This achievement wouldn't have been possible without Saskatchewan people showcasing their generosity and kindness. I ask all members to join me in thanking all those who've donated their time, money, and energies to make this year's Kinsmen Telemiracle another success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Breaks Record for Agricultural Exports

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that Saskatchewan for the third consecutive year has broken its record with agricultural exports. In 2013 Saskatchewan exported a record \$11.7 billion in agricultural exports. Saskatchewan's exports represent 23 per cent of Canada's overall \$50.4 billion in agricultural exports and more than one-third of our provincial exports.

In 2013 wheat was the top export at \$2.08 billion, followed closely by canola seed at \$2.05 billion. Other top exports that we had include canola oil at \$1.5 billion; durum wheat at \$1.3 billion; lentils, 1.2 billion; as well as peas at \$1.1 billion.

Our top export markets include the USA [United States of America], China, Japan, India, and Mexico. A few of these markets significantly increased their imports of Saskatchewan's exceptional agricultural products, including India which was up 54 per cent; United States which was up thirteen and a half per cent; as well as China was up five and a half per cent this past year, Mr. Speaker. We're well aware . . . We're well on our way to meeting our growth plan goal of \$15 billion in agricultural exports by the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this Assembly to join me in thanking our producers and all stakeholders in the ag industry for their dedication and commitment, and congratulate them on breaking our export record for the third consecutive year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Huskies Win Canada West Women's Hockey

Ms. Campeau: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to congratulate the University of Saskatchewan Huskies who won the Canada West Women's Hockey title in a 2 to 1 double overtime victory over the University of Regina Cougars last night.

This series was an entertaining showcase of the fantastic women's hockey talent we have in our province. Mr. Speaker, it took a total of 17 periods over three games this weekend to declare a winner between the two teams. Friday's match ended in favour of the Huskies when Marley Ervine scored in double overtime to give them a 1-0 lead in the series. The Cougars came back on Saturday and evened the best of three event with Alexis Larson's goal halfway through the fourth — yes, fourth — overtime period. The game, which was held over a five-hour span, set a new Canada West record for the longest game ever played, breaking the previous record by 36 minutes.

The epic series was capped off on Sunday with the Huskies' Kaitlin Willoughby scoring five minutes into the second overtime period.

Mr. Speaker, we should be so proud of both our teams competing over the weekend, and the series was a big win for

female hockey in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating both the Huskies and Cougars teams on their hard work over the weekend, and wish the Huskies luck in the upcoming CIS [Canadian Interuniversity Sport] national championship in New Brunswick. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Athletes Compete at Sochi Olympics

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to commend the Canadian Olympic team, who took part in the 2014 games which were held in Sochi, Russia last month. The games ignited national pride and united Canadians everywhere, sometimes in the wee hours of the morning in order to catch a live event to support our athletes as their years of hard work materialized on the world stage. We should be extremely proud of each and every athlete who represented our country. Together they brought home a grand total of 25 medals from the 17-day event.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the 16 Saskatchewan athletes who competed in Sochi. Each was an exceptional ambassador for our province and showed the world as well as all the young people right here at home that you can grow up to be a world-class hockey player, figure skater, or snowboarder right here in Saskatchewan.

I'd like to make special mention of our Saskatchewan athletes who won medals at the games, including Mark McMorris who took home a bronze medal in the snowboarding slopestyle event, Hayley Wickenheiser who played a pivotal role in helping the women's hockey team win the dramatic gold medal final against the US [United States], and Ryan Getzlaf, Chris Kunitz, Patrick Marleau. They were players. Mike Babcock was the head coach who helped Canada capture gold in men's hockey.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating all of our Olympic athletes on their performance and would like them to know how proud we are of them all. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Financial Support for Care Facilities

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've obtained internal documents, Mr. Speaker, that the government refused to make public. And what those documents show is that this government did not listen to the urgent need in seniors' care facilities.

Health regions, Mr. Speaker, brought forward their most urgent requests, but this government made them revise those proposals and water down those urgent requests. It's bad enough, Mr. Speaker, that this government wasn't even devoting new dollars to fix the problems with seniors' care — it was simply reallocating existing funds — but it's especially frustrating, Mr. Speaker, that this government forced health regions to actually change their urgent requests.

My question to the Premier: who was it in the government that forced health regions to significantly scale back their urgent requests?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify what the Leader of the Opposition had to say in terms of where the dollars came from. Mr. Speaker, the \$10 million that we announced in the Urgent Issues Action Fund, as well as the commitment to \$3.8 million in ongoing funding as a result of the Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker, did not come from the regional health authority budgets. So it wasn't dollars that they were asked to allocate, reallocate internally, Mr. Speaker. Those were new dollars that the regional health authorities didn't have access to previously, Mr. Speaker.

What we had asked, Mr. Speaker, within the confines of \$10 million, is that the regional health authorities seek dollars that would be roughly in proportion to the number of beds that they have within the health regions, Mr. Speaker. When it became clear that that was going to be greater than the \$10 million, Mr. Speaker, we asked them to revise their proposals to fit within the \$10.04 million that was provided by this government for the Urgent Issues Action Fund.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the health regions knew there were limited dollars available, and for that reason they put forward very moderate proposals. The Saskatoon Health Region, Mr. Speaker, says that it actually needs 450 more care aids, but it simply requested 38 because they knew that resources on this, Mr. Speaker, were extremely limited by this government. They said, Mr. Speaker, they actually need 450. They asked for just 38, Mr. Speaker, but the government, this government, still said that they were asking for far too much. The government forced them to slash that very moderate request in half, to just 19 additional care aids.

Also in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, in the region, about 1,700 lifts are required. It requested, the health region, just 100 lifts, but the government once again forced them to slash that number and to request just 56 lifts.

My question to the Premier: who was it in the government that forced the Saskatoon Health Region to slash their moderate requests for urgently needed staff and urgently needed materials, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thought I had answered that first time around, but I will repeat myself, Mr. Speaker. When the requests were coming in for dollars, knowing that the government had available \$10.04 million in immediate dollars, as well as a commitment to \$3.8 million, Mr. Speaker, we did urge the regional health authorities to make revisions to their proposals so that, Mr. Speaker, not one health region would get 100 per cent of the dollars, Mr.

Speaker. We wanted to ensure that all the health regions did receive some dollars.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of lifts and other types of equipment that the regional health authorities require, Mr. Speaker, we don't just leave it to a \$10 million Urgent Issues Action Fund to address those. That is done on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker, through the maintenance dollars that are provided annually to health regions. Mr. Speaker, as an example, we have provided in capital, in terms of new buildings, new renovations, and the maintenance of health care facilities, \$1 billion in just six years, Mr. Speaker, compared to just 300 million by the members opposite. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't have been digging ourselves out of such a deficit in terms of maintenance dollars, Mr. Speaker, had the members opposite invested more.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this government was strong-arming the health regions, telling them what in fact are their urgent needs when it comes to seniors' care. Mr. Speaker, I think the people working on the front lines delivering care to seniors in our province know where in fact the urgent needs are and at what level they are at.

In Prince Albert Parkland, seniors' care facilities said they urgently needed about 10 new full-time workers, but the government made them resubmit their request and say they needed just in fact three workers. P.A. [Prince Albert] needs 131 lifts, but the government made them resubmit that request to say they just need 53 lifts. The government also forced P.A. Parkland Health Region, Mr. Speaker, to entirely remove their request for dementia units in the health region. Again to the Premier: why did this government force the P.A. health region to ask for fewer workers, for fewer lifts, and no dementia unit at all?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, is it the position of Leader of the Opposition that all \$10.04 million and the ongoing \$3.8 million should have gone to one health region? Is it his position that P.A. Parkland should have received 100 per cent of the dollars, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the fact that Prince Albert Parkland is receiving 53 lifts, Mr. Speaker, may not get the P.A. Parkland Health Region to the total number of lifts that they need, Mr. Speaker, but it's 53 lifts that they will have that they didn't have a year ago, Mr. Speaker, or six years ago or 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

What we indicated, Mr. Speaker, is that, within the confines of the \$10 million, that health regions provide what is their most urgent issues within long-term care, and that we would use that information, Mr. Speaker, on how those dollars would get to front-line staff and our residents, the improvements that it would make, and then help to inform government of future decisions, Mr. Speaker. So that is, Mr. Speaker, what we did through the \$10 million as well as 3.8 million in ongoing funding.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it is the health regions' role to determine the urgent need, Mr. Speaker, and it's this government's role to decide where the dollars go. It is not the health regions' role, Mr. Speaker, to sanitize and clean up, Mr. Speaker, the urgent need requests just to fit with this government's communications exercise.

The list goes on, Mr. Speaker. Five Hills Health Region urgently needs 15 bathtubs and 15 track lifts but the government forced them to take eight of those tubs and nine of those track lifts out of the request. Five Hills urgently needs nine new nurse call systems, but the government made them entirely remove that request. Sun Country was forced to remove three call systems and 36 lifts from their request.

Cypress Health Region urgently needs over \$900,000 in repairs but the government made them say that they only needed \$300,000 in repairs. They also forced the Cypress Health Region, Mr. Speaker, to scale back their staffing request, cutting the number of LPNs [licensed practical nurse] by 80 per cent and the number of care aids by 50 per cent.

My question to the Premier: why did his government fail to actually listen to the urgent needs in the health regions throughout Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to talk about what we are doing through the Urgent Issues Action Fund. Mr. Speaker, for example, Five Hills the Leader of the Opposition mentioned. After the first 60 days of the fund, 11 tubs had been ordered. One has been installed and they're developing a plan for the five track lifts that have been required, Mr. Speaker.

In Cypress, there are additional LPN and care aid positions, Mr. Speaker. The job descriptions have been finalized. The positions have been posted. I would be happy to keep the Leader of the Opposition up to date when in fact the region interviews people, when they actually do make some hires, Mr. Speaker. What we have provided, Mr. Speaker, unlike what the members of the opposition did when they were in government, we recognize the need within long-term care, within seniors' care.

We did allocate, in year dollars, \$10 million, Mr. Speaker, and we will be making decisions based on how effective those dollars have been going forward, Mr. Speaker, unlike with the members opposite when they were in government — closed facilities, closed beds, and fired nurses and care aids across this province.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the questions have been why this government was meddling in the health regions, forcing them to water down the urgent needs that they have identified for seniors here in Saskatchewan.

What's especially frustrating about this, Mr. Speaker, is that at the same time as this government was forcing most health

regions to scale back their requests, their urgent need requests for staffing and the basics and pieces of equipment, at the same time they were doing that, Mr. Speaker, the government was actually having discussions with another health region asking them to add funding to their request for another lean consultant. This government, Mr. Speaker, was telling health regions to cut back their requests for the basics, for staff, for lifts, for bathtubs, for repairs. There's no money for that, Mr. Speaker. It's poverty. But when it comes to adding another lean consultant, Mr. Speaker, there's resources for that and they force the health region to request that.

My question to the Premier: why on earth is his government prioritizing more consultants instead of actually fixing the basics for seniors here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government, as we've said publicly, have never shied away from, Mr. Speaker, we have become the first jurisdiction in Canada to apply a lean methodology across the entire health care system, Mr. Speaker. It has been responsible for significant savings, Mr. Speaker, significant efficiencies, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue on that front, Mr. Speaker. Health regions have asked for additional support when it comes to engaging lean, Mr. Speaker, as well as providing training for front-line staff to become more familiar with lean, Mr. Speaker, as we develop it across the health regions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we had indicated to the health regions is that it wasn't an unlimited dollar amount that was provided through the Urgent Issues Action Fund, that it was limited at \$10.04 million, Mr. Speaker. And we wanted to ensure a process where each health region would receive dollars roughly equivalent to the number of long-term care beds within their regions, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly what we have done.

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

Budgetary Plans and Education Funding

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most Saskatchewan families are already feeling squeezed because their bills keep going up and life keeps getting more and more expensive, so it's no wonder why Saskatchewan families are concerned that the Premier says he might hike education property taxes on their families. And if you can imagine, the extra money will apparently be used for roads and overpasses, not even for education, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: families are concerned. What's the plan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well I think the member opposite and many of the members opposite have been in this Assembly for a long time. They understand the plan. They understand the plan. The member opposite chirps from his seat, Mr. Speaker, but he knows full well that the budget is announced for March the 19th. It will be delivered. And as the Premier has already said, it will be a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we fully recognize, we fully recognize that the member opposite wants to talk about all kinds of things and wants to get in some little information, Mr. Speaker, that he might have knowledge of, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell him that today is March 3rd. Budget day is March 19. And I look forward to the questions from today until that date, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Families that are getting squeezed on front after front deserve greater certainty than that answer right there. We have significant needs in our education system that this government simply isn't paying attention to. Classrooms are overcrowded and under-resourced. Schools aren't getting the much needed repairs they need. The government now can't even build and own new schools, instead has an ill-advised scheme to rent private schools. So it's no wonder why Saskatchewan people think the Premier's new plan to hike education property taxes to pay for roads and overpasses is absolutely ridiculous.

To the Premier: will he really be breaking his promise and raising the education property taxes for Saskatchewan families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, let's talk about a few other numbers that the member obviously needs to know. Mr. Speaker, prior to the government, our government, making the changes to ensure that today we fund over \$1.1 billion of the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system, when that NDP [New Democratic Party] government was in place, Mr. Speaker, they had tax revolts. They had tax revolts right across this province. People were unwilling to pay the high amount because they downloaded. They downloaded year after year after year onto taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, we have made that change, and I'm going to very quickly say that all across the entire province — doesn't matter whether it's Regina or any small town — the mill rate on residential properties is 5.08, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, in many of the school divisions, prior to 2007 the mill rates were 21 and 22.

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

Budgetary Plans and Financial Reporting

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we know that this government is the first government in Canadian history to fail an audit on its GRF [General Revenue Fund] books. Remember, Mr. Speaker, that they actually claimed that they ran a \$60 million surplus, only to be exposed by the Provincial Auditor that they had run a deficit of \$600 million. So there's no question that this government doesn't know how to manage its provincial finances, Mr. Speaker. But Saskatchewan families are growing increasingly frustrated that they have to keep paying extra to make up for that government's shortcomings.

To the Premier: will he finally be straight today and commit to scrap his wrong-headed plan to hike education property taxes of Saskatchewan families, an unfair hike that families simply can't

afford?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I want to clarify a couple of things to the people of Saskatchewan. Number one, the model that we follow, the model that was introduced by the NDP in 2004, has been followed identically, Mr. Speaker. We do the General Revenue Fund, which is referred to often as our chequing account, our operating account, and we do the summaries, Mr. Speaker. The summaries are done at mid-year and they are done at year-end.

Mr. Speaker, at year-end we were very pleased to report that the summaries which we had forecasted at budget were going to have a surplus of \$149 million, in fact, Mr. Speaker, that surplus is well over 400 million. So I don't understand the member opposite.

One day in this legislature he stands and he says you have to budget only on summaries. Well the summaries clearly indicate at mid-year that we were going to have a \$400 million surplus, Mr. Speaker. Now mindful . . . You have to be aware of what your chequebook account is. That's the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker, and we indicated that we needed to use some of our savings account to ensure that we met the obligations for the people of Saskatchewan.

[14:15]

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

Grain Transportation

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, farmers in Saskatchewan are increasingly frustrated that the provincial and federal governments are not doing their part to solve the grain transportation crisis. And those farmers cannot understand why this Premier is going around saying that the federal Agriculture minister, Gerry Ritz, is doing a great job and providing strong leadership. Very few farmers who see their prices falling, their bins full of grain, and their bills piling up would share the Premier's sentiment on that, especially since farmers are being told the carry-over probably won't be resolved until well into 2015, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: where's the evidence that the federal Agriculture minister has been doing anything to actually help move this bumper crop to the market?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The issue of the grain transportation in Western Canada and for the province of Saskatchewan is by far and away the most important issue facing the province today. And I think it says much about the NDP and their view of agriculture and how out of touch they are that it took until now for there even to be a question in question period today. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that on May . . . Well the deputy leader is chirping from his seat about being late on the scene. That's the question I'm going to answer.

May 31st of last year, the Minister of Highways and Transportation, Agriculture officials, first meet with CP

[Canadian Pacific] Rail to say, here's our growth plan; here are our targets for harvest. How are you going to get ready for the transportation requirements? Subsequent meetings in June on the New West Partnership port capacity study with two other Western provinces. July 24, 2013, our Ministry of Agriculture officials meet on the subject again. It happened again in October. Mr. Speaker, I can tell this House, and the Ag critic should know this and the leader should know this as well, that on the 7th of November the Minister of Agriculture wrote to the Government of Canada, wrote to all the stakeholders to say, we've had a record crop; there are capacity issues; what are you prepared to do about it? Mr. Speaker, there is a long list here through November and October, culminating, Mr. Speaker, this last week in meetings with the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Transport federally.

We're hopeful for urgent federal action. We ask the NDP to join us in a call for that action. That's the short-term solution. The longer term solution may be looking north and south. The Minister of the Economy will be in Fort Worth, Texas this week to meet with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway to talk about that, Mr. Speaker. This is the number one issue in the province. It's the number one priority for the Government of Saskatchewan. We wish it were for the members opposite.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's two things first off with that response. First of all, in this Assembly last year on March 18th, we were asking questions of the Minister of Agriculture about the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act* and why they weren't doing anything to encourage a proper solution at that time. Nothing's happened since. Further to that, the question was about why the Premier is supporting Minister Ritz, who has done nothing. We didn't ask for a catalogue of what this minister has done.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers, the farmers are feeling the brunt of a grain transportation crisis that's getting worse, and provincial and federal governments are refusing to do much of anything about it. So when that government spends its time praising the federal government, it doesn't make an ounce of sense to Saskatchewan farmers.

When the NDP did propose real solutions to the grain transportation crisis, that Agriculture minister refused to listen and he actually questioned whether there are even answers to the crisis. To the minister: has he changed his mind? Does he now recognize that there are answers to help farmers get their grain to the market?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'm supporting the federal minister, to quote the hon. member opposite, because he hasn't done nothing. Mr. Speaker, we know that the federal government, like the provincial government, has been canvassing all of the options available. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of reasons that have caused this perfect storm in agriculture. There is a weather situation certainly that has affected the size, the length of trains, Mr. Speaker. There is the fact that railways have unfortunately been laying off personnel

and decommissioning locomotive infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. There's also the record harvest obviously and more oil moving on rail because, Mr. Speaker, we have some in this country who still oppose pipelining the energy and the oil across the country.

Mr. Speaker, in our conversations with the federal government, we have noted the Act she has referenced. They are aware of the fact that too much in current legislation in terms of service level agreements is voluntary. We've said to the federal government, these things need to be compulsory. We've said to the federal government, the option of mandating car fleet size has to be on the table as well.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that both the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport — and last week as well I discussed this with the Prime Minister — are aware of all of the options. This House can help advance the issue by calling on the federal government today, supporting their efforts for emergency legislation that would make the parts of this that are voluntary mandatory so the grain will move across this country to our customers, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of course we can agree there are a number of important things that have to take place, and the most important thing is to get the grain moving. And I think that's something we are in agreement here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, here are the tangible solutions that the NDP has put forward. First of all, we called for more pressure to be put on the rail companies since last year when the bill was in the House, Mr. Speaker, in the federal House. We have called for joint running rights. We have called for legislated performance standards, including enforceable penalties when railways don't perform, and we are calling for fixes to the flawed *Fair Rail Freight Service Act*, Mr. Speaker. And our Agriculture minister has dismissed those ideas. He said, "The answers, if answers exist, are not that simple." My question is to the minister. When will this government stop dismissing practical solutions and when will farmers see meaningful action?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — This is a very serious problem for farmers in Saskatchewan and Western Canada and indeed for the economy of our province, and lots has been done. The Premier started to read a list of actions that this government has taken and, you know, as far Minister Ritz goes, I have been . . . I think producers know that when I don't agree with Minister Ritz I say so, but I do believe that Minister Ritz is engaged in this file and I think that we're going to see some action.

We've asked the feds to increase their reporting requirements around actual car spots, loading at country elevators, delivery of cars to ports, and unloading of cars at ports from monthly to weekly. We want to see the Canadian Transportation Agency be able to independently investigate grain movement before formal complaints are made and we encourage the federal government to pass emergency legislation that will set standards for performance and put in place penalties, reciprocal penalties,

between grain companies and rail . . .

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The House knows full well that we're going to have further opportunity to talk about some of these details. Our question for the people of Saskatchewan is this: why did this minister question whether answers . . . that there even are solutions for this problem? He said that publicly. And also, why did our Premier praise the current Minister of Agriculture for doing a great job, Mr. Speaker, when he has failed to serve the farmers of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Well I have never said that there are no solutions to this problem. That's incorrect.

As far as the NDP's sole idea, their only idea that they've advanced is joint running rights. Mr. Speaker, joint running rights provisions already exist under the Canadian transportation Act. It's just a matter of the negotiations taking place and for the deals to be made. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, in fact it's just not that advantageous for either of the railways to complete these deals because that is not the problem.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is lack of locomotives and crews, and clearly there needs to be some proper penalties in place to compel the railways and the grain companies to provide proper service. And those are the problems, Mr. Speaker, not joint running rights as the NDP continue to insist.

The Speaker: — Well I can tell the members are happy to be back in the Assembly and that they're enthusiastic. And I would note that they've been exercising their vocal cords because they're rested, but I hope that you don't put too much of a strain on them during question period. Thank you. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I wish to ask leave to move a motion regarding the grain transportation backlog.

The Speaker: — The Premier has requested leave to move a motion regarding grain transportation backlog. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Premier.

MOTION UNDER RULE 61

Grain Transportation

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By leave, I move:

That this Assembly supports the federal government introducing emergency legislation to address the grain transportation backlog.

Mr. Speaker, members of this House will well know the serious situation that's confronting Saskatchewan farmers today, that's confronting an entire agricultural sector, and so therefore confronting the economy of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's some important facts that need to be laid on the table in terms of this debate. I think, as the nature and the scope of the problem has become more and more apparent over the last number of months, the other reality is that there are a number of issues at work here. There is not just one or even two or even three reasons why we are facing the situation that we are facing. And by the way, that situation can be described in a couple of ways that are statistical and others that are perhaps more graphic or more poignant for people that may or may not be aware so much about the issue in terms of agriculture.

From a statistical standpoint, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note there is at least 5 million tonnes of grain waiting to move from this province. From a statistical standpoint it might be interesting to note that off of the coast today, off of the coast at the Vancouver port, the port at Prince Rupert, there is up to 50 ships, empty ships waiting to take our grain, our commodities to markets around the world.

On a less statistical front, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note, it should be interesting for all of us to know that Japan has recently announced that when it comes to its wheat purchases, it will be moving from Canadian sources to American sources, Mr. Speaker. It should be interesting and compelling for all of us to remember that Algeria — for example, a very important customer for our wheat — has not yet been contacted by those who market the grain, by the companies, because the companies themselves are not sure they'll be able to supply them in a timely way.

It should be interesting to note that, according to officials, we might be 15 to 20 days away from processors of oats running out of oats. That should tell us a couple of things: one, the relative importance of Canada's oat production again in terms of being a world food power; and also the fact that 15 to 20 days is not very long from now. That part should underscore the urgency of the situation we face.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell members of the House that on our fall Asian trade mission, we focused a lot on Saskatchewan's ability to take advantage of the fact that those fast-growing economies in the ASEAN [Association of South-East Asian Nations] region in Asia, they want food security. And so we were talking fertilizer and there to support Canpotex and their customers they had for potash.

We were also talking about agriculture, Mr. Speaker. And I will not soon forget a meeting we had with millers in Manila. Remember that this is in late September early October, well before the current crisis had developed into the full bloom we see now. But I remember hearing from one miller in particular, a large miller in the ASEAN region, telling us in that room along with members of STEP, Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, and the Saskatchewan delegation, that even then, prior to this crisis, they don't bother calling Canada in December and January. They don't even phone. They buy some wheat from us, but not . . . They don't place any orders in those months because of the reliability question.

I had the occasion to come back and meet with the Prime Minister shortly thereafter and to debrief the Prime Minister on some of our views from that trip. And top of that list was the fact that our federal government needed to be concluding free trade agreements in the ASEAN region. And the very second thing I talked about was what was going on in terms of transportation, the need that we would have — because by then it was pretty clear we were going to have something close to a record harvest in Saskatchewan — the need, I said to the Prime Minister, that we would have a long-term capacity to meet the needs of customers around the world. And that formed, I think, the longest part of that particular meeting that I had with the Prime Minister, though there are always a number of important issues we at least certainly try to raise.

[14:30]

You know, we talked a little bit about one issue, and it's only one and there's a lot of debate about it. We talked about the revenue cap that exists on the railroad companies. It's there likely as sort of a part of the implementation of the Crow rate, to keep freight rates down, and so the principle and premise is a solid one. But it might be having an unintended impact today, if in fact the revenue cap is causing railroad companies to reallocate cars away from agriculture. Because once they exceed the cap, they actually have to pay a penalty into agricultural research funds. They can't actually claim that for the company.

I listened to Minister Ritz on that subject earlier this week. And when I met with him this week I said, you know, with respect to that revenue cap, we support your remarks that it can't be thrown out in its entirety. That's not the right thing to do, but we may have to modernize it a little bit. There's one particular issue that we need to focus on here, and maybe it'll be raised by others in the debate.

The other challenge we have is the fact that service level agreements, as prescribed by legislation that's been referenced, is basically a voluntary proposition. And for those that are watching, those service level agreements are agreements between the railroad companies and a grain handler, and they are by and large voluntary. There are reciprocal penalties theoretically agreed to by each side, and if performance isn't met — i.e., grain's not moved — then, Mr. Speaker, the penalties are enforced. The problem is there is not yet in Canada today one single example of one of those agreements in place. Not one.

And so we have said to the federal government, and not just recently, but we've been saying to the federal government that while blunter measures of the House of Commons ought to be a last resort, they will need to be an option. And one of the options could prescribe perhaps less voluntary agreements — forced agreements. Another legislative option from the federal government in emergency legislation might be to look at the fleet size, might be to look at actually the complement of cars.

I think it's fair to say that we ought to be loath to intervene, really to intervene directly in matters of the market. In the long term these things don't bear out to be successful. However, there are certain exceptions. Here we have a duopoly, you know, in terms of free markets, not entirely that free, just given

the number of entries involved and the fact that they've been granted this, basically this corporate dispensation from the government at one point or another in the history of our country. And so we need to send a message from the legislature today that we support what we know is already being considered by the federal government as an option. And I guess this goes a little bit to some of the questions we heard in question period today, and I would offer this to members.

I think some of them would be aware of . . . There would be a few of them would be aware of the nature of government. Sometimes what you're going to say at the uni-mic or in a scrum, Mr. Speaker, is a little bit different in terms of intensity, at least from what might be going on behind the scenes, because you're trying to find the solution. You're trying to encourage parties to get to a solution before you have to use the blunt instruments of legislation which are . . . They're hard to change. Toothpaste is hard to get back in the tube if you don't get it exactly right.

And so it's certainly our confidence, based on what we know to be the relationship, to be the interaction, that those very aggressive meetings have been taking place, that every option has been talked about quite candidly with all of the stakeholders. And, Mr. Speaker, that first and foremost, service level agreements — especially as urged by our own delegation led by the Minister of Agriculture and supported by the Minister of Highways and Transportation, and the Minister of Economy — that we were urging these service level agreements to be executed. We just don't have one yet, Mr. Speaker.

And so because of the urgency of this situation, we simply cannot wait. We are at the point of that last resort. We are at the point of saying to the national government of our country that they have the support of this legislature. They have the support of the government that represents 44 per cent of the arable acres in Canada, that has more at stake in terms of this issue than any other place in the Dominion of Canada. We're saying to them they have the support of that place in the federation to do what is necessary — by law, by regulation, or by order in council — whatever they believe to be to have the full effect of sending a message that this grain must move, that whatever the resources are required by the rail companies, by the grain handling companies, those resources would be deployed in a timely way and that we would see the grain moving.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, as well. We were aware over the weekend there's been a lot of talk about the railways. And so there should be. But there are other stakeholders in this debate that could also be affected by emergent federal legislation. The grain handlers, as well, fit into this category.

We were hearing, anecdotally admittedly, over the weekend that there were cars that had moved by the railway companies to the West Coast full of grain from Western Canada that were sitting idly by and not being emptied because the grain handling folks out on the West Coast had a weekend. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately that's not acceptable either. It's not acceptable either, given the nature of this situation and just how important it is for us. The short-term solution, we believe, is prescribed in this support for the federal government to resort to these measures — legislative order in council or regulatory.

But, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, our efforts — and this has already been the efforts of the Minister of Highways and Transportation, witness the meeting we held back in May 31 with officials with our growth plan and its targets in place; and also the priority of the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of the Economy — is that we also had the long-term solution for this. Because while we got to that record crop we highlighted in our growth plan, about six years earlier than we had as an idea of when it might happen, Mr. Speaker, we got there. And we may not have a record crop next year or the year after — we may — but likely we will have a new norm in Saskatchewan, which are bigger and bigger crops.

Combine that with the fact that there is more oil moving on rail. More oil moving on rail, by the way, because we can't get it together in this country, that the most efficacious and safest way to move the oil is not on the rail but in a pipeline. Whether it's carrying bitumens or oil across our country to the ocean, or whether it carries oil across the United States to the Gulf, we need all of the above. We need the west to east pipeline as well, so there's less pressure on the transportation network caused by grain. So that's part of the long-term solution.

Another part of the long-term solution that we believe merits at least exploration — and I shared this with the Minister of Agriculture federally — is that we need to diversify our transportation options. Right now they're basically limited, for the most part, east and west. Certainly there is a capacity on the Soo or other lines for the main companies to take products south, and there's obviously a lot of trade that goes north and south between Canada and the United States. Principally though, grain is an east-west proposition. And we've even heard, as Saskatchewan mused about moving grain to the south, we've heard the rail companies say, well, we've got all of our resources focused on east-west. And we understand that. We support that, frankly, right now. But in the long term, in the long term, we need to encourage others, independent companies, maybe rail companies from other jurisdictions, other countries to look at an investment here.

There's some good news on this front, Mr. Speaker. At Northgate, Saskatchewan, there is an area you'll know well. There is a logistics hub that's being established by a private company called Ceres Global, an agricultural global. And they are in fact, as you know, laying track and building a railway for oil and grain straight south to connect with the BNSF. We know, Mr. Speaker, as well that Burlington Northern is actually investing upwards of around \$20 million to connect back to that Northgate company, to that new rail company. We need to encourage them to expand capacity where they can and, frankly, we need to encourage other north-south expansions, knowing that east-west has got to be fixed in the long term. We need to diversify where we can.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's going to help shortline railroads in our province. We may have to offer some incentives as a government, maybe new growth tax incentives, perhaps on the locomotive diesel fuel tax. We've said publicly we'd be open to that. We'd be open to it if it afforded a long-term solution.

I can report to the House, as I did in question period, that the Minister of the Economy will be headed to Fort Worth, Texas this week to meet with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway

Company. He will meet with the CEO [chief executive officer] and the chairman of the board, which would indicate to me there might be some interest on their part as well in at least discussing what's possible.

Mr. Speaker, we need long-term solutions. This Assembly and all of its hon. members should be really . . . should be focused very much on this. It goes to the success of our economy, not just in agriculture but in potash and in oil and in manufactured goods, because of course we are in the middle of the country. We need to get our goods to the coast. We need to get our goods out of province and so that all of our producers can get a worthwhile return.

In the meantime though, we need to take short-term action. And I do now believe, Mr. Speaker, because of the efforts of this government frankly — and yes the federal minister, and yes the grain handling companies and the railway companies that have engaged, have had the meetings that we've asked for — but I believe that all of the options short of government action, federal government action, have now been explored to no avail, unfortunately to no avail. So now again the leading agricultural province in Canada, whose exports broke its own record a year ago — year over year we're breaking export records, never mind harvest records — now they need to hear from that province. They told me last week they want to hear. So did the Prime Minister. They're even interested in some specific information we can offer, and we'll most assuredly do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is why it is time for us to call on the federal government in this way:

That this Assembly supports the federal government introducing emergency legislation to address the grain transportation backlog.

I so move.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Premier:

That this Assembly supports the federal government introducing emergency legislation to address the grain transportation backlog.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure this afternoon to enter into this debate on grain transportation and a situation that is very serious and very concerning for the entire province and especially for producers here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we know that there are many producers who have done everything that they need to do in order to have a successful growing season, to get the crop off, and to have the crop in the bins, Mr. Speaker. But we know now that producers are faced with lower prices and are faced with a real problem in terms of getting their product to markets and being in a position to be paid and benefit from the good growing season and the good crop that they had.

And the Premier was correct with respect to the good growing season that we had. And while we can't predict what the weather is in any given year, we know, Mr. Speaker, that we

have the great potential in this province to have good yields in years to come and that this is in fact an issue that is concerning not just this year but for the years to come.

We know, Mr. Speaker, for producers who have bills to pay, that there is a great sense of urgency to this crisis in producers needing to be paid for the crop that they have. And while it's absolutely concerning to producers, we know that there are huge implications for the entire province, for the businesses that operate in rural communities, and for the entire provincial economy with respect to the services and goods that producers put back into the economy and the taxes that they pay, Mr. Speaker, to the provincial coffers.

So we know that there is great urgency on this issue. And this is something that we've been talking about for some time. And it's with that sense of recognition of the urgency, Mr. Speaker, why we're also concerned with the lateness of both the federal government and the provincial government in paying attention to the issue, to giving it the attention that it deserves and demands, and demonstrating any sort of willingness, Mr. Speaker, to look at solutions, yes, for the short term as the Premier spoke about, and for the long term, Mr. Speaker.

So we're pleased to see some action but we're absolutely concerned with the duration of time that it has taken to get to this point. And I think, Mr. Speaker, in looking at the dismissive approach that we've seen from this government and the federal government, that they have indeed had their head in the sand for too long, Mr. Speaker, and in fact, have dismissed very constructive solutions and some concrete actions that were put on the table at an earlier date, which are now being part of the discussion, Mr. Speaker, but at the time were deemed to be simple-minded and not practical.

It was actually back in January, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP brought forward some ideas that we heard from producers. Among those things that we highlighted that should be done, we called for more pressure to be put on rail companies. We called also, Mr. Speaker, for a legislative review of the *Canada Transportation Act* to be sped up to allow for swift and meaningful action.

[14:45]

We also called for joint running rights, Mr. Speaker — something that's being discussed now — so that any rail company can operate on another rail company's line in exchange for fair compensation. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that this would provide more competition and simply give producers more options for getting their grain to market.

We also called for performance standards, including penalties for when rail companies do not perform. But when we brought those ideas forward, Mr. Speaker, the government dismissed them and it was actually the Agriculture minister, Mr. Speaker, who said, and it's a quote, "The answers, if answers exist, are not that simple." That's when we talked about some of these concrete ideas that need to be discussed and which we're talking about today. If answers exist, if answers exist — that's what the Agriculture minister had to say.

Now we've also heard more . . . More recently, Mr. Speaker,

we've heard from the Premier who's been going around and saying that the federal minister has actually been doing a bang-up job in providing strong leadership on this issue for producers in Saskatchewan and for the entire province. Mr. Speaker, I have yet to meet or to hear from a producer who shares that sentiment. I do not know where that position would come from.

And I heard the Premier allude to, in his remarks, the fact that, well sometimes what you say in a scrum is a bit different than what you might say in the Assembly or in a meeting. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between perhaps being a bit silent on an issue and there's a . . . between that and actually heaping praise on a federal minister that is recognized as completely dropping the ball and not looking out for producers' interests and Saskatchewan's interests. And I am still puzzled by the remarks that the Premier would make with respect to praising the federal agricultural minister.

Mr. Speaker, producers are frustrated with the federal agricultural minister for being asleep at the switch and for failing to take meaningful action to fix the backlog that we are seeing. Producers have bins full of grain and bills are piling up and they need action and they need solutions now to solve the grain transportation crisis.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion and I think it's about time in fact that the provincial government and the federal government actually begin to take this issue seriously.

I support appropriate and effective legislative changes that will actually address the grain transportation crisis, fix the broken system, and help our agricultural producers in the near future. I support joint running rights. I support measures that will put pressure on the rail companies and to start serving agricultural producers in a much better way.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a discussion about the decisions that rail companies have made, and I support performance standards, including penalties for when railways don't perform. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that government needs to stop treating the rail companies with kid gloves while those rail companies who are failing to get the job done for Saskatchewan producers have not demonstrated urgency or concern with the plight of Saskatchewan producers.

And you know, going back again to the remarks of praising the federal agricultural minister, you know, it wasn't long ago, a few days ago, that I heard the federal minister in an interview say that he was loath to regulate and to intervene. When we see that kind of approach, Mr. Speaker, it causes many flags to go up with respect to this government, this federal government's ability to take this issue seriously and to take the right and corrective steps that are required.

And it also puts up flags when we hear praise coming from this provincial government of the federal minister's job of having been a good job and having done well for Saskatchewan people. That also puts up a lot of flags for me with respect to the approach. That's why I say, Mr. Speaker, I support legislative changes, but they need to be appropriate and they need to be effective and they need to actually address the grain transportation crisis, fix the system, and bring help to producers

here in Saskatchewan. Those are the types of changes that I would like to see and the types of changes I think that producers here in the province would also like to see.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we have a system that has put railways and grain companies in total control and left producers completely at their mercy, with no real competition, with no alternatives, and no real legal recourse for when they're not served properly. It's all evidence, Mr. Speaker, that the system as it is right now is broken and it does in fact need to be fixed. The current approach cannot go on. So it's absolutely time, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government took attention, paid attention and took action on this. It's about time that the provincial government actually recognized that there are solutions, that answers do exist. But what's required, Mr. Speaker, is the political will to actually make those changes happen.

So I want the federal government to introduce legislation, Mr. Speaker, that is appropriate, that is effective, and will actually address the grain transportation crisis, and will actually help producers here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few remarks on this motion. A few others from our side will enter in on the debate, Mr. Speaker, but thank you for the opportunity.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is clearly the most serious problem in agriculture in Saskatchewan these days and one of the dark clouds over our entire economy. This is a very important issue. We've done a tremendous amount of work on it as a government. And I believe through that work that myself, other ministers have done and certainly our Premier, I think that we have the attention of the federal government focused on the issue. And you know, the Leader of the Opposition is more, is more interested in bashing the federal Minister of Agriculture than he is in finding a solution to this problem. That's a scary thing to me, Mr. Speaker, and I think it should be to all farmers in this province.

We are focused on solutions. We have been very helpful in providing possible solutions to the federal government, and we're encouraging them to follow through with those solutions, Mr. Speaker. It's going to take legislative solutions to this problem. The railroads are not competitive companies. They're duopolies at best and in many cases, in most circumstances, they really act as monopolies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition also mentioned that we are taking a dismissive approach to this very serious problem. Mr. Speaker, the Premier started in question period to read a list of actions that this government has undertaken so far on the problem, and I'm going to read the whole list.

May 31st, Mr. Speaker, Ministry of Highways and Agriculture officials met with CP to outline the agricultural targets in the Saskatchewan plan for growth and how that would affect the need for improved rail service. June, began work on a New West Partnership port capacity study. July 24th, Ministry of Agriculture officials met with Mark Hemmes of Quorum consulting. Early October, the Minister of Highways and the deputy minister of Highways met with CP in Vancouver on

grain transportation issues there.

In October, the deputy minister of Highways toured the Vancouver port and met with Alliance Grain Terminal. October 25th, Highways, Economy, and Agriculture met to talk about what was happening with the movement of commodities to port at that time. Highways quoted CN [Canadian National] and CP as saying they have lots of capacity and the constraint was at port.

November 7th, the Minister of Agriculture sent letters to federal government, railroads, grain companies, and all other stakeholders regarding the record crop and the importance of an efficient transportation system. November, deputy minister of Highways met with federal deputy minister of Transportation to discuss grain transportation issues. November 21st, Ministry of Highways and Agriculture officials had a conference call with federal ADM [assistant deputy minister] to discuss grain transportation issues. November 25th, Minister Stewart, Minister of Agriculture, met with CP Rail. December 6th, senior Highways, Economy, and Agriculture officials met with CP Rail.

January 2014, Ministry of Agriculture officials met with Prairie West Terminal. January 21st, senior Highways and Ag officials met with Port Metro Vancouver. January 29th, federal, provincial, territorial agricultural deputy ministers' meeting which included discussion on grain transportation that Saskatchewan played a key role in. January 31st, a conference call with Pulse Canada and senior ministry officials regarding the Pulse Canada five-year transportation monitoring project being funded by the federal government.

February 4th, Minister of Agriculture met with CN and CP senior officials again. February 12th, Premier appointed a delegation of ministers of Agriculture, Highways, and Economy and MLA for Rosthern-Shellbrook to lead the grain transportation file. February 13th, Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Highways officials held conference call with Saskatchewan producer groups. February 13th, delegation met with Viterra. February 14th, delegation met with Western Grain Elevator Association, including Viterra, Cargill, Richardson, P & H, and Louis Dreyfus Canada, in Winnipeg. February 20th, delegation met with CN Rail. February 21st, delegation met with CP Rail. February 27th, the Premier met with Minister Ritz and Minister Raitt.

Mr. Speaker, all of this has happened, plus many more casual conversations that have happened between ministers and senior officials of grain and rail companies and Port Metro Vancouver, and still the Leader of the Opposition claims that we have a dismissive attitude about this very, very serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, I remember . . . You know, I've been around this business for a while, and these problems were occurring in the 1970s. And I understand they occurred in the '50s and the '60s, and they occurred again in the '90s. And they're happening again now, and it's not okay. We need permanent solutions, Mr. Speaker.

And that's what we're working with the federal government to achieve finally, once and for all, permanent solutions so this will not recur every time there is a lot of grain to move to port.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with the federal government, and we're asking the federal government to provide emergency legislation which will include levels of performance for the railways and grain companies and reciprocal penalties for lack of performance, Mr. Speaker.

And we've worked with the federal government to increase reporting requirements around actual car spots, loading at country elevators, delivery of cars to ports and actual car unloads at ports. And, Mr. Speaker, that has been met favourably. Mr. Speaker, it's more constructive to be part of the solution than it is to just criticize the people that are trying to do that. And that so far is what we've heard from the NDP — that and a rehashed idea from the 1970s, Mr. Speaker, of joint running rights, a theme that comes up every decade or two.

You know, I can visualize the Leader of the Opposition — since they have no agricultural or transportation expertise on that side of the floor, Mr. Speaker — I have this visual of the Leader of the Opposition going through a storage room somewhere in the bowels of this building, Mr. Speaker, looking through boxes of old documents to see if they can come up with an idea. And finally he's blowing the dust off these boxes, and he sees one finally that has something to do with transportation. It says, dumb ideas we floated in the 1970s on transportation. So he goes, he digs through that box, Mr. Speaker, until he finds a document — no doubt signed by a former leader of the NDP party, Mr. Speaker, the previous one — and that's all they could come up with. And that's all they've done.

They sit in the weeds and take potshots at both the federal minister and myself and the Premier, anybody who's actually trying to solve this problem, Mr. Speaker, but they have no real solutions. That rehashed idea of joint running rights from the 1970s isn't going to fly. It's not going to help and nobody's going to do it. Nobody's going to do it by compulsion. The ability is there for the railroads to do that right now. And if there was any advantage to them to do it, they would have done it decades ago. All it does, it's a distraction from the real problem.

Mr. Speaker, I think our course is clear. We are working constructively with the federal government to achieve a permanent solution to this problem. And I expect to see evidence of that, very substantial evidence of that, before the end of this month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a . . .

[15:00]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it's clearly a first day back for the spring session here at the legislature, and this is an excellent topic and an important topic, I think, that we can get up and debate on today. And certainly as the minister has said, it's one of the most important issues facing grain farmers in many, many years and one that needs immediate and urgent attention.

I just think we want to go back a little bit though because why is it so emergent and urgent at this point in time, Mr. Speaker? The issue of the railways having a monopoly or duopoly in

Canada is not new. This didn't happen three months ago. What the minister said on January 29th was that "We've been dealing with this issue for a couple of months now." Well this issue isn't something — that's the end of the quote — this issue is not something that came up a couple of months ago, Mr. Speaker. The power and the monopoly of the railways has been in place from the beginning of the history of this country.

And I think if you read any sort of analysis by the experts on the role of the railways here in Saskatchewan and in Canada when it comes to moving our grain, it's that they continue to hold this monopoly or duopoly, depending on how you want to characterize it. Any market expert will tell you that that's not really creating a market in any way, shape, or form. And certainly that's why we have federal laws dealing with that, and I'll get into that in a couple minutes.

What we have here, and I think we have to make no mistake, there's two issues here. One is the very powerful railway lobby and a very powerful railway industry that is controlling the transportation of grain in Canada — very, very powerful lobby. And I've heard they have over 200 full-time paid lobbyists on the Hill in Ottawa working this issue, Mr. Speaker. So this is no small issue for the railway companies. They are having record profits as well. They're doing very, very well, and yet we can't move our grain. So those are some things that are very clear and evident to the public and to legislators as well, and we're hearing that today. We're hearing this government acknowledge that that is not acceptable, and my only fear is that it's too little too late.

Unfortunately this government still has to play nice with the current federal Minister of Agriculture, and we have a Premier here who . . . I want to quote from an editorial on February 28th from the *Leader-Post* where Murray Mandryk is commenting on Premier Wall's recent comments about Minister Ritz in the newspaper. And what Murray Mandryk said is:

Take Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, who — notwithstanding his elevated status as Stephen Harper's replacement-in-waiting — felt the need to stroke the ego of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz by uttering the nonsensical observation that he was doing fine work on the transportation file.

And then he went on to discuss a Twitter that the Premier put on his Twitter account, announcing to the world: "Another good meeting with Minister Ritz on grain transportation. Thanks for your leadership."

Mr. Speaker, I think clearly this is not the appropriate approach to take with Minister Ritz because we have an Agriculture minister who has declared that he was loath to regulate. And if you have an Agriculture minister at the head of this country's agricultural ministry saying he's loath to regulate, that's exactly the problem that we have. And obviously the paid lobbyists for the railway industry are doing a good job because they've convinced our federal minister that he's loath to regulate, and that's simply not acceptable.

Now the grain transportation Act or the *Canadian Transportation Act* was under review not two months ago, Mr. Speaker. But several years ago it went under an extensive

review. And during the process of that review, this current government came up with a bill last year, Bill C-52, and that's the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act*, Mr. Speaker. And that Act was supposed to fix the inequality that we see with this monopoly that currently exists with the railways in Canada moving our grain. It didn't work.

And in fact last year when it was in second reading, our NDP federally introduced a number of amendments to make this Act work. The grain shippers, who also had an opportunity to present in committee, tried very, very hard to introduce some reasonable amendments that would make this proposed legislation provide some of the balance that we need between the railways and the users of that mono-utility, Mr. Speaker. And all of those amendments were rejected, all of those amendments.

And for the minister to suggest that we haven't been commenting on that is completely unfair because I specifically questioned him about it last year in March, Mr. Speaker. And perhaps I need to reread some of the questions I put to him so that I can refresh his memory, and that we did in fact express concerns about the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act*.

So for example, one of the questions that I asked, Mr. Speaker, was where the government stood on the bill and whether it supported the concerns of the shippers. And that was the first question on March 18th, and the minister said:

... you know, these days we haven't heard a lot of feedback from producers ... But we are interested and working with the federal government to get the best deal that we can for Western Canadian producers.

So that was his response to the question then. I also asked about the amendments. I indicated, and I'll quote myself, Mr. Speaker. I said:

The shippers have proposed amendments to fix several of the problems in this bill. What is the Minister of Agriculture and Government of Saskatchewan doing to persuade the federal government to support these amendments and take the proposed captivity test out of the proposed legislation?

And the minister said, thank you. And he said, our officials have been in contact with the federal government. And then he went on to say, we think that the bill is generally an improvement over what has existed.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the minister was not actively seeking the types of changes that the Premier is now advocating and that he's now advocating. They've lost an entire year. And in fact they should have been on that even before then, before Bill C-52 was even introduced into the federal legislature. So I went on to ask a number of other questions for him.

At that time, I indicated that the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities was concerned about fairness and the arbitration costs on the way the bill was drafted. I went on to say the bill needs to have better protections for shippers against the duopoly. And then I asked him, what will the Sask Party government be doing to correct the shortcomings of the bill a

year ago — a year ago March 18th, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's response at that time, he said, I want to assure the member that our government and officials are doing all we can to influence Ottawa, to bring forward the best possible legislation in the interests of our producers.

And they didn't do anything, Mr. Speaker, until just today. We finally hear the Premier saying that this government, even though Minister Ritz is loath to regulate, that that is really the absolute solution that's been required. It's a solution that's been called upon now by the NDP for several years. And I think it's shameful that this government isn't willing to acknowledge that and to sort of move forward and get the kind of regulatory changes that are needed so that farmers and producers in Saskatchewan aren't held captive and indeed aren't being robbed of, in some cases, estimates up to \$8 billion of farm revenue that's being taken out of farmers' pockets this year, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to go into a little bit more detail about some of these issues. One of the things I heard, Mr. Speaker, was that ... Here's an interesting statistic. In the fall of 1994, Canada exported 8.7 million tonnes of grain. Twenty years later, we exported 7.4 million tonnes of grain. So we have actually exported less grain this year than we did in 1994. The question is, what happened? And I think what the analysis is proving out is that as farmers, producers, the taxpayers, and grain shipping companies have introduced extreme efficiencies into grain transportation — longer trains, better throughputs — all of those things have really improved over the years.

Where have these efficiencies fallen, Mr. Speaker? They have fallen into the pockets of the shareholders of the two railway monopolies in Canada. They're not going to producers and they're not going to shippers. And you know, at this point I'm focusing mostly on the impact on the producers.

Right now we know that the shortfall is 55,000 cars. This is grain that has been ordered and the railways have promised to deliver. This is not grain that's sitting in the bin and not even purchased yet, Mr. Speaker. They're 55,000 cars behind on the contracts that have been entered into; 5 million tonnes of grain that orders are in for that have not been filled.

We see, in the fall, the railways were moving about 10,000 cars. They're now grinding down to 5,000 cars — half of that input because of weather issues. And certainly that's something that happens in Canada. But what you see is the efficiencies that have been built in are actually causing problems for the railway now because they can't move the long rails. They need more locomotives.

Well what do we find out? That in 2012 we know that one of the railway companies, I believe it was CP, actually cut 400 locomotives from their fleet in order to ... Here we are. And CP announced in 2012 it decreased its workforce by 4,500 people. They cut 4,500 jobs. That's one railway. They reduced the railcars in its fleet. They took out 11,000 railcars in one year, Mr. Speaker, and they also pulled 400 locomotives in 2012. So of course they can't move the grain. They're benefiting their shareholders, but they're certainly not dealing with the surge capacity that they need to get this crop to the

market, Mr. Speaker.

What's being asked for? First of all we need more capacity. That can be regulated. We need a recovery plan for the carry-out that we're dealing with. This carry-out is going to be a huge impact, and certainly other people have spoken about it, but we're looking at possibly going right into 2015 unless, again, if there is legislation passed.

You know, it just . . . It kind of strikes me odd because I just read, I think yesterday that Tim Hortons is building 500 new Tim Hortons in Canada this year because they can and because there's an impetus to do that. So in this case, where there's a will, there's a way. For the railway, there's no will and so there's no way. And that's the biggest problem we're seeing with this type of monopoly in a grain transportation system.

We're going to hear a lot in the next few days about the grain revenue entitlement. And some people are referring to that as a cap, the grain revenue cap, and it's a part of the system that was put in place when the lobbyists and the railway finally convinced the federal government to get rid of the Crow rate, which was supposed to be forever, if people recall. But anyways the Crow rate was dismantled and this grain revenue entitlement was put in place.

And what I'm told, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to be very, very careful about what we ask for because we might get it. And the experts' view is that if we remove the grain revenue entitlement, it would be a big mistake. Even adjusting it is dangerous, Mr. Speaker, because it's an inflationary control mechanism. And what it does is it ensures that any escalation in freight rates associated with moving the grain is consistent with the rate of inflation. So it's just an inflationary control mechanism.

And in fact what I've heard is that the railways are actually using this to benefit and make more money. And one of the examples that was given was that they're able to adjust the price of gas that they use at a 2000 level. And so they can actually gain more because the price of gas has exceeded the inflationary rate, so that they can actually save money through using this grain revenue entitlement.

The other thing I think that's very, very important for people in this legislature to take note of, if we're going to start advocating for the elimination of the entitlement, is that it doesn't work. If you think that removing the grain revenue entitlement is going to increase the delivery of grain, it simply isn't going to work. And here's an example: there's no evidence that shows that shippers would get better service if it was eliminated. In fact there's existing evidence that poor service and insufficient capacity would remain. And for example, Mr. Speaker, those 55,000 cars that are behind right now, about half of them are in non-regulated corridors. Those non-regulated corridors are not subject to the revenue cap and yet they're still not able to move the grain through the non-regulated corridors. So there's no reason to think that if we remove the entitlement that it would give any positive benefit on getting our grain to the market.

There's a whole host of things that are at issue here, Mr. Speaker, and I don't want to go on too much longer, although I'm tempted. But I think there's some things that need to be

placed upon the railways. And as the Premier and the minister are suggesting, it has to be regulated. First of all, there's no consequences on the railway for providing an unsuitable car. Right now, if a shipper rejects the car, penalty \$250 a day. If the railway provides an unsuitable car, no penalty. Supply and acceptance of railcars. Right now a shipper, if they're not able to take delivery, if they order cars but for whatever reason they can't take them, they're charged up to a \$250 fee per car. What happens if the railway fails to supply railcars? Nothing. Timeliness of service. If the shipper doesn't load or unload the railcars in time, they're charged \$87 per car per day. What happens to the railway if they fail to deliver cars at a time set by the railway? Nothing.

So again, over and over we see that the railways have absolutely no penalties, and we have to question why. And we have to question why we have a federal Agriculture minister who says he's loath to regulate when we can see over and over these examples of where the railways have convinced the legislators that they should have it their way.

[15:15]

One of the things that we've been talking about is this monopoly of railways. And certainly the Premier and the minister have acknowledged that. If you look at the *Competition Act* in Canada right now, you can see how monopolies are dealt with under the *Competition Act*. So generally if a business has a market share of less than 35 per cent, there won't be concerns about competition. If you have a market share of more than 35 per cent, there will be an examination of the issue, and the government will look into it. And if you have a market share over 65 per cent, there will immediately be examination of that competition rule, of that monopoly.

Okay. So we said 65 per cent, the federal law kicks in. Guess what? CN and CP have 94 per cent of the market, but they're not subject to the *Competition Act* in Canada. They're exempt. So there again you have an example of this particular industry convincing the regulators that they should have special rules. And I know the history of the railways in Canada is deep and certainly long history, but over and over they have convinced the legislators that they need special treatment.

Bill C-52 or the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act*, introduced last February I think, or it went through the House in March of last year or early last year anyways, basically, Mr. Speaker, it was flawed from the start. And certainly, as I indicated earlier, there was a number of calls for amendments to make it worse . . . make it better. But that didn't happen. What was missed was that the whole idea of creating balance between railways and shippers was premised on the basis that there was a balance to begin with, but there wasn't. There was no balance in place at first. And there was a number of other issues that were problematic with the bill.

The arbitration provisions did not apply to the penalties. And you've heard the minister and the Premier speak about, why aren't there rail service agreements? There's a good reason why. There's no shipper in Canada wants to enter into a rail service agreement right now with the railway because there's no way to enforce the penalties. So what the shippers are saying is,

we could spend hundreds and thousands of dollars drafting the best agreement, service agreement, that we could come up with, but we cannot get an arbitrator to rule on the penalty clauses. And therefore the railways continue to hold the hammer. So why would you, as a shipping company, spend hundreds of thousands of dollars drafting an agreement and negotiating it when it's unenforceable? It just doesn't make sense.

The shippers pointed that out at the time when the bill was introduced last year, when it went through the committees and they asked for amendments, and Mr. Ritz's response and the Minister of Transport's response was a flat out no. They were loath to regulate. And so I'm hoping that this Premier and that this minister have the power to get him to reverse his point of view on this, Minister Ritz and the entire cabinet of the federal government, because this is, as the Premier pointed out, this is an incredibly, incredibly important issue.

We need penalties for poor service. We need a fast-track arbitration process. These are substantive legislative changes that should have been made years ago, but it's not too late, and if we're dealing it as an emergency, which it now is, then they should be put in right away. There's no reason to delay that.

A number of other things that the shippers are calling for, and producers . . . And you know, the minister and the Premier have listed long lists of meetings they've had. Mr. Speaker, we've been meeting too. And we've been meeting with producers and we've been meeting with farmers and we're hearing the same concerns from the farmers that the Premier's hearing from the heads of the companies and the officials that he's meeting with. So this is a universal issue. It's across all layers of the grain transportation and the agriculture industry here in Saskatchewan.

One of the things you'll hear the railways say — and this really, really drives me crazy, Mr. Speaker — is they say you don't build a church for Easter Sunday. So what that means is, the analogy is that you can't put all the surge capacity in place for peak periods. Of course our grain, we want to move it in the fall. That's the peak period for us, and we want our railways to be able to deliver the grain during that period.

But what the speaker who made this comment likened it to was to your power utility. If you have a power utility like SaskPower that decides they don't want surge capacity in place when it gets really cold, well then they would just turn off the heat. And for a utility, Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable. Same as Canada Post. We know that at Christmas time they have a lot more mail to deliver. Do you think they can say, oh we'll have a carry-over and you'll get your Christmas mail in September, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Speaker, that just is not acceptable.

What's most concerning, I think, from a government perspective — it should be — is the loss of up to \$8 billion in grain farmers' pockets for the upcoming year. How can that be acceptable? We hear today the Minister of Finance talking about putting \$1 billion into infrastructure. We're looking at possibly \$8 billion in one year out of farmers' pockets because of the extra costs, because of the loss in prices. And yes, as all this is going on, Mr. Speaker, of course we know that the price of grain continues to fall. And farmers now can't even get contracts. There's no shipping company that will even take a

contract because those 55,000 cars are non-delivering the contracts that the railways promised they could deliver in this last six months. So it just keeps going.

And in fact one of the analogies that I heard recently was that this is like if you shut down . . . At an airport you've shut down one of the runways. All of a sudden there's congestion and then there's chaos. So you have people trying to book other flights and they're trying to move into a different airline. And so all that busyness that is caused by the chaos is compounding the issue and it's becoming, as we all know, a very crisis kind of situation.

So I think at this point, Mr. Speaker, I know that other of my colleagues are interested to weigh in on this issue, but right now I can tell you this: our team is prepared to support this motion and we're going to fight for the problems of our producers alongside this government because we agree of the importance of the issue. We're very disappointed that it was allowed to go this far, and it should have been dealt with much sooner. But we want action, Mr. Speaker, and we do. We want it now. Thank you.

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

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I as well would like to just lend one more voice to the seriousness of this issue for our agricultural producers in this province and really to the economy of our province if you look at how involved agriculture is in the economy of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to talk with, you know, all stakeholders throughout the industry but in particular talked with many producers over the course of the last number of weeks and months. And, Mr. Speaker, just again the importance of this issue to our producers is first and foremost and therefore first and foremost to the importance of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to have a few comments on how we . . . where we are. And really what we are in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is we have a large amount of exports, whether those exports are potash, whether those exports are lumber with the increasing lumber industry coming back on stream in the North, Mr. Speaker. We have containers in and out of the province as well as oil leaving the province, Mr. Speaker, as well as our agricultural products. Many of these products are leaving by rail, Mr. Speaker. Some of them do have some other opportunities to leave and other methods and safe methods such as pipelines, Mr. Speaker. And we encourage that discussion on the promotion of a number of pipelines out of Western Canada as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, the long and the short in where we are today is that we are about 50 or 55,000 cars behind on our grain exports to the coast, Mr. Speaker, and this is most notable when you just look at where the grain is, Mr. Speaker. And first of all, our producers have most definitely done their job, as they produced a record crop in Saskatchewan, but not only in Saskatchewan, in Western Canada. Our crop in Saskatchewan was 38 million metric tons this year, Mr. Speaker. That's 48 per cent above the 10-year average and 27 per cent above our previous record last year, Mr. Speaker. Western Canada, our

production is about 75 million tonnes, Saskatchewan being a significant portion of that, Mr. Speaker. And combined with that, as of last fall we had about a 6 or 7 million tonne carry-over from last year.

And when you look at that crop, just as of a few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, we have about 95 per cent of our Prairie inland terminal space is full. Our elevators in essence are really plugged. And, Mr. Speaker, as you look at the port capacity, we're at about 57 per cent; 55, 57 per cent of that capacity is full. So really the problem lies between those two points, between the Prairies . . . And that doesn't include all of the grain that's still left on farm. That's just in our inland terminals. The problem lies between our delivery points in the Prairies and our ports, Mr. Speaker.

The result of that are numerous. You know, demurrage on ships; there's ships waiting in the ports, Mr. Speaker. But really the results that our producers see are the lack of delivery options that they have right now on products that they've had contracted for delivery last November, last December. As well as, Mr. Speaker, with the lack of those delivery options we're also seeing an ever-increasing basis on our products that are delivered. And, Mr. Speaker, this is reflective of the lower price that producers are seeing, as actually the world price is still there, but with the increasing basis, the market signal is that the price is lower to our producers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just go to the recommendations that we released earlier this week, and really you can separate the issue or the challenge into two challenges. One is more immediate, and that's this year's crop and we need to get that moving, Mr. Speaker. And there's a couple of things that need to happen in very short order, and the first is we need more railcars going to our port facilities, Mr. Speaker, whether it be Vancouver, whether it be Prince Rupert, whether it be our south markets and, eventually as the frost comes out, our north markets and our eastern market. But, Mr. Speaker, we desperately need more transport on it. We need more railcars. We need more grain moving to the port.

And in light of that, in the next number of weeks and months, Mr. Speaker, we need to watch our basis and have our basis start to decrease because as producers are selling and contracting grain into this market, this year's grain and next year's grain, Mr. Speaker, that basis, when it's wide like that, it's when our producers realize their loss. So it's very important, Mr. Speaker, that in the next number of weeks that our rail cars increase their traffic; and two, that we're able to push this basis down, Mr. Speaker. That is the immediate pinch points that we have in the system.

And I can quite say that I'm to some degree encouraged with some of the discussions we've had over the past number of weeks, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to seeing some reprieve as we move forward here.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when you look at pinch points in the system, and one of the pinch points quite obviously is our rail capacity, in particular in the cold weather, but another pinch point, Mr. Speaker, that we also need to keep our eye on is our port capacity and our ability to unload at port terminals, Mr. Speaker. All of these things affect what level we can get up to

with our deliveries to the coast. And then, Mr. Speaker, rail is one and port capacity is another. So also in our press release here last week, we did call for 24-hour unloading capacity at the ports, which I think if we do get up into a significant increased number of rail cars unloading at the port, it will be important that we're able to unload them there.

Another item that we've called for, and actually an important item, is some transparency in the system. And we've supported the federal government on the moves that they've made towards some transparency in the system as well as we've asked, Mr. Speaker, to even further that to weekly transparency so that you can follow the transportation through the system — cars spotted in the Prairies, cars loaded on the Prairies, cars delivered to port as well as cars unloaded on the port, Mr. Speaker. What that does on a weekly basis is it allows anyone — whether it's a producer, whether it's a member of the government, whether it's a rail line or a rail company, a grain company or a rail company, pardon me — to have a look and ensure that the system is fluid and that it's moving.

Mr. Speaker, just to talk a little bit again about some of the pinch points in the system. Like I said, this last year Western Canada had a record crop, about 75 million tonnes with a 6 or 7 million tonne carry-over. Mr. Speaker, if we're able to get up into the . . . increase our number of cars, there's been different reports come out, but one of the reports had mentioned if we get up into the 10,000 car range a week for the next . . . until harvest, that we're still looking at carrying over maybe 20, 25 million metric tonnes in Western Canada. But if you put that on top of an already average year — let's say that we have this next year of 60, 65 million tonnes of production — we're right back this fall in the situation that we were last fall. So, Mr. Speaker, this is an urgent issue for our producers, but it also has some lingering effects. And as our Minister of Agriculture said, and others in this House, we need to work on the urgent issue, but we also need to work on a long-term correction to this so that it absolutely does not happen again.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, when you . . . And again just back to our press release. Some of the recommendations that we had, four of them are long-term around service level agreements. Mr. Speaker, we've recommended that the grain companies and the rail companies look at these service level agreements and have them with reciprocity and with penalties going both ways, Mr. Speaker. And what that will do is it will create some accountability between those two parties. Whether that comes by legislation or by a corporate contractual agreement, Mr. Speaker, we will support whatever it is, whatever methods can speed that up and get that into place as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of that then, Mr. Speaker, is for the grain companies then to look at their contracts with producers and again have some reciprocity and penalties in there. And, Mr. Speaker, what this will create is it will create some accountability, some accountability, Mr. Speaker, from the farm gate to the port on our grain deliveries. Right now what's happening is our producers are . . . There's one pool of money, and it's from our producers' product, Mr. Speaker, and our producers are paying. They're paying for this, Mr. Speaker, and we definitely need to have some accountability that starts at

their farm gate, follows itself through the system right to the port wherever that may be, Mr. Speaker.

Again with our long-term recommendations, we again ask for more transparency on the cars and the loads. And as our Premier had alluded to this morning, Mr. Speaker, we need to look at other options. Right now we have the predominant amount of our grain is on an east-west delivery cycle. Mr. Speaker, all options need to be on the table. If there's any other opportunities — not that one answer will solve everything — but any other opportunities that are out there and are available, Mr. Speaker, we need to look at them to take some of this new-norm production that we have in our prairies to move some of that to whatever markets we can around the world.

I'd like to just talk a little bit about the last week and a half. I had the opportunity to get back into my constituency and talk with some different producers and get to some provincial hockey games and some curling bonspiels and just discuss with guys. And one local challenge that I believe is in that north-of-Saskatoon area is there is quite an oat market that has developed in that north-of-Saskatoon area. And a lot of those oats, Mr. Speaker, are heading for the US. They're heading to US millers. And numerous guys I've talked to have numerous carloads of producer cars, producer cars that were contracted for November and have not yet been loaded, Mr. Speaker.

I talked to one fellow with 24 cars contracted, another guy with 24 carloads contracted, another guy with 28 carloads contracted, as well as I did talk to an oat buyer. And, Mr. Speaker, the hand-to-mouth system that our oat millers in the US are working on — and our producers have the product, the good Canadian product, and they just are unable to get it there — is very real. It's very real. The millers are on virtually a day's worth of supply, Mr. Speaker.

And as a testament to that, one producer I did talk to had 28 cars booked with an oat miller, and they're sending trucks to get them. They're getting trucks to four hours north of Regina, a community up there, 100 trucks to pick up 28 carloads of oats, Mr. Speaker, and they are trucking it to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I think the cost of trucking those oats that distance speaks to the urgency to get our product to its export positions or to a position where it can be milled or wherever that sale point may be.

Again talking with local producers, you know, we discussed different challenges that are out there. And of course the first one is, you know, many of them have November, December contracts for all sorts of grain — I mentioned oats — but many of those have not been delivered on. And there are other options. I mentioned that they're trucking the oats to Iowa, but there's other guys that are looking at other options. But a lot of that grain, Mr. Speaker, just simply has not been delivered yet and is creating some cash crunch, Mr. Speaker.

The lack of delivery again is increasing the basis which is creating trouble for uncontracted grain this year, but it's also creating some troubles as producers look to contract next year. The basis is wide going into next fall. And as guys start to sell next year's crop, Mr. Speaker, they in many cases are getting down to cost-of-production values on their crop.

So this is a significant issue for our Saskatchewan producers, and it's one that this Minister of Agriculture, this Premier, and other ministers are standing up for Saskatchewan producers and working with whatever stakeholders that we can, whether it be railways, working with grain companies, Mr. Speaker, working with the federal government who actually is in charge of changing legislation on this, Mr. Speaker. There's discussions going on with the federal government, but most of all, most of all, Mr. Speaker, listening to our producers and working with them and taking their advice on how we move forward on this issue in the short term to get rid of this year's crop, to get into it so that we're in a marketable position and get our basis down so we can market next year's crop, but in the long term so that we can create some accountability from the farm gate to the port so that we don't run into this situation again, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to keep working on that.

I'm encouraged to hear that members of the opposition are also going to support this motion today. And I'd like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I will be supporting this motion today on behalf of the producers across the province and in Western Canada. So thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter the discussion here today and provide some supportive words towards the motion that's been brought forward here today and certainly do support effective and appropriate legislative measures in an immediate fashion to resolve the grain transportation crisis that's such an issue for so many across our province and for our economy frankly as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

What we have to recognize is that the current environment in Saskatchewan was one that we had this record crop for which there was a great pride of this province. As weeks and months advanced throughout the late summer months, it was with great pride that we realized as a province and that producers knew that they had one of the finest crops in their history. That crop turned out to be the record crop for this province, Mr. Speaker, and was a point of pride for government and the province as a whole.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the reality now for producers is that record crop is sitting in bins all across Saskatchewan, hasn't been marketed, hasn't been moved to port, and that producers are left in the lurch. Producers are left with bills to pay. Producers are left with loans that are due. And of course they're setting up and organizing for another growing season, leaving them in a very precarious, very vulnerable environment.

It's without doubt that the producers of Saskatchewan deserve better than they've received to date from rail companies and from both governments — the provincial government and the federal government. They deserve action to get their product to market, and that's what we need to be pushing both levels of government to ensure can occur.

The sad reality though, Mr. Speaker, is that as producers have been left without an ability to move their grain to market, they've experienced a collapse in the commodity markets. And even in resolving the immediate grain crisis as we need to and

taking the steps for the long term as we must, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't resolve the challenge facing producers that, resulting from this record crop for which they can be rightfully proud of, now are never going to be paid the adequate dollars that they should be paid. So there's all sorts of pressures that the producers are facing across Saskatchewan.

Of course we know that resolving the inadequate rail performance in Saskatchewan is important not just for those producers all across this province — and it's critical for them, Mr. Speaker — it's important to our economy as a whole. We're a proud export-driven economy, Mr. Speaker, with pursuit as a government and with support on most fronts to increase those exports but without an adequate plan to make sure that rails will perform, make sure that producers can get their product to get to market or other exports for that matter as well, Mr. Speaker.

Now a lot of what we're experiencing this year was rather foreseeable. And that's why it's a concern to us that we're entering in at this late date here in March of this year, spring, Mr. Speaker, because what we knew is that when that crop was in its late season last summer, this was a tremendous crop. In fact there were all sorts of news releases from government — rightfully so — celebrating that. But there were no meaningful actions from that government, that Agriculture minister, that Premier, to make sure the planning was in place to move that crop to market. And it shouldn't have been as a surprise. It should've been no surprise.

Dating back a number of years, I believe back to about 2008, the current federal government put together a panel to review rail transportation with an aim to, I believe, with an aim to improve transportation logistics. And I believe that panel, that group took some time with their work. They did some good work though. And when those recommendations came forward in 2010, and they came forward again in years after that, there was no action from the federal government to address the concerns that they were bringing forward. And you know, it needs to be said, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, setting aside the marketing debate over the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, but setting aside the marketing debate about the Canadian Wheat Board, there's little debate within the agricultural community about the important role that it played within transportation logistics, the movement of grain, the organization of these processes in an orderly way that served producers and giving them some important clout in the market when they needed it most.

You know, I remember. As those debates move forward, those discussions move forward, and as the federal and provincial governments moved unilaterally to dismantle the Wheat Board, I sat in many halls all across this province, Mr. Speaker, listening to producers who were saying that, setting aside the marketing role of the Wheat Board, what's going to fill the gap on the side of transportation logistics? Who's going to be fulfilling the roles for ensuring that the grain, the product, can get to market?

And this was something that was brought forward directly to the federal government — brought forward directly to the provincial government if they cared to have listened, Mr.

Speaker. And they had a responsibility in dismantling a process that had, on the side of transportation, served producers well. They had a responsibility to fill the gap and to ensure that there were some structures in place, some actions taken to make sure that the rail system would perform with the lost role of the Wheat Board in transportation and the lost clout that was so important.

So the current reality is we have a record crop that's sitting in bins all across the province and I understand as many as 50 ships sitting in the Burrard Inlet right now waiting for grain. The problem is the grain's not getting there, and of course every day that they sit there, they're charging demurrage back to Saskatchewan shippers, producers. That comes directly out of the bottom line of any farm operation in this province, directly out of the bottom line of producers.

We have the current environment that's been left unchanged by the federal government and this provincial government of a duopoly that simply hasn't been performing. And this isn't new, Mr. Speaker. Producers and shippers have been speaking to this matter for many, many years, many years, calling for action, calling for an improved environment. And right now in this duopoly of two big rail companies that have full control over all of the movement of grain in essence on those two major rail lines here in Canada.

And producers, farmers across Saskatchewan are held captive by this environment, Mr. Speaker, with no transit alternatives and the impact of course felt by them, felt by the fact that their record crop is sitting in bins not able to get to market, felt by the fact that when that grain may start to move, Mr. Speaker, that they're going to be getting a significant percentage less because of the commodity price collapse that producers have experienced, and producers that are in fact incurring the expenses of those ships sitting in port, not receiving grain.

It's quite simply a failure to perform as a rail system, and the rail companies certainly need to be held to account on this front, something that this government and the federal government have seemed very unwilling, very reluctant to do, Mr. Speaker, seeming that they're far more comfortable treating those two big rail companies with kid gloves, if you will, Mr. Speaker, siding with big rail instead of siding with the producers and standing up for the producers of this province who deserve action.

[15:45]

You know, if you just look at some of the collapse in commodity prices and the impact that that's going to have on operations across Saskatchewan, on businesses across Saskatchewan, we have wheat that just that past fall was selling at \$7 a bushel that's now selling at \$4.80. You have canola that was selling at \$12 a bushel that's now selling for \$8.50. Those are real dollars that are taken out of Saskatchewan's economy and taken out of producers' operations all across our province.

So it's fair to say that action's needed today. It's fair to say that we'll support a motion that will call for effective and appropriate legislation to resolve this crisis. But the reality is that both the provincial government and the federal government have been asleep at the switch on this one, Mr. Speaker, and

have been unwilling to act in the interests of producers, all too willing to side with the big rail companies, Mr. Speaker.

And let's just, you know, review just the circumstance of one of those rail companies who hold producers captive, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I heard the Premier pointing at the ports, you know, and the fact that workers have weekends. Now the reality is that I don't think they're actually getting grain right now. That's the big part of the challenge.

And you know, I find it interesting that, I find it interesting that there's no mention of the fact that one of those big rail companies and CP I believe in 2012, you know, cut a massive amount, a massive amount of capacity at a time where that capacity's needed right now. And I believe they actually at that point in time, they cut — let me check here — 4,500 jobs, Mr. Speaker, 4,500 jobs, Mr. Speaker. They also cut 11,000 rail companies or rail cars — sorry, Mr. Speaker — 11,000 rail cars and over 400 locomotives. That's what CP was doing in 2012, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd urge the Premier not to get distracted about the cause for the lack of capacity in the system right now. And as we've been urging him for months, Mr. Speaker — and it seems as though there's a willingness finally to take this issue seriously — is that there's actions that are going to be required that, you know, that maybe the rail companies he likes to side with simply won't like, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? Saskatchewan producers, we'll side with Saskatchewan producers any day of the week, and I guess the Premier can decide where he fits within that debate.

You know, we also want to be cautious as we go through this process. We want to go through . . . be cautious here. I hear from the Premier here today a willingness to scrap the revenue cap, which provides just a little bit of protection to producers about the price that they can be charged to move their grain. You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's wise for us to be supporting the federal government and this government to be removing some of the protection that's in place for producers, Mr. Speaker.

Actually what I think we should be doing is I think we should be strengthening the protection for producers across the province. And I think, you know, I think I would caution the Premier with his openness to a call that will further reduce protection of producers at a time where they need some support, at a time where they don't have the clout that they deserve and even to, you know, to I guess challenge the notion the Premier's putting forward that somehow he wants to remove the revenue caps from protection on the price of moving grain for producers at this point in time.

I'll challenge that, is that I believe of the 55,000 cars that are waiting right now, that at least half of those or around half of those, Mr. Speaker, are running on corridors that are not regulated, corridors that aren't subject to the revenue cap is my understanding, Mr. Speaker. So you know, I think that that very piece in itself challenges the notion that somehow the revenue cap is the piece that is holding back, you know, the transport of grain for Saskatchewan producers.

So I don't support the elimination of, I don't support the

elimination of the revenue cap. And I urge the Premier to be reconsidering his push on that front, because again this is something that simply weakens protections for producers at a time where they've already had clout dismantled by that government and the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

When we go back and look at this bit of I guess history on this front, as I say, this was very foreseeable. Producers have been speaking for years about the failure of the rail companies to perform, the rail system to perform. People like our Agriculture critic have spent extensive time questioning that Agriculture minister and pushing him to take serious the need to make improvements to the rail system, speaking about federal amendments that were in place that would have actually allowed some enforceability for service agreements that currently are in an environment that I understand that are toothless, that simply can't be enforced. And that was done well before this crisis of grain transportation. That's last year sometime.

And as I say, over the course of the past few years I've been — and I know many of our members, and I would hope government would have heard some of this — I've been in town hall after town hall and churches and community centres where I've heard from producers the concern over who was going to be there to organize the orderly distribution of transportation of grain after the dismantling of the Wheat Board. And again setting aside the marketing debate on the Wheat Board, this government failed to listen to Saskatchewan producers who were clear to this government, who were clear in community meetings that there was an important role to be fulfilled in making sure there was orderly transportation of grain.

Now we support . . . As I say here today, we have a crisis in this province that needs to be resolved. Our producers deserve nothing less. We've been calling for actions, Mr. Speaker. I can go back to January of this year where we were urging government to take this issue seriously — brushed off by that Agriculture minister, brushed off by the Premier who entered the debate late, Mr. Speaker, the discussion late, Mr. Speaker.

And actually at the time in January, that Agriculture minister actually said he wasn't even sure if there was any answers that he, you know, could provide or if solutions even exist. His quote was, if answers exist. You know, it's not really the can-do spirit, can-do attitude of Saskatchewan people who deserve something better from their Agriculture minister and that government at a time when they needed it most.

But we will support measures to get this grain to market, to get this record crop to port. And certainly we'd appreciate consideration within that. What we've been hearing from Saskatchewan producers, aspects such as the concept of open access or joint running rights, ensuring that there's a level of competition right now in . . . entering in some competition to a duopoly that has full control, making sure there's some alternatives that are in place for producers is something that they simply don't have right now.

Mr. Speaker, what's wrong with ensuring that there's opportunities for other rail companies and for shortlines to gain access to those rail lines and to be a part of the solution? We've

got those 13 shortline rail companies here in Saskatchewan that could be a part of the solution, Mr. Speaker, and we should be considering that front.

Of course, something we've been calling for since January, something that was brushed off by the Premier and that Agriculture minister, was performance standards to be established, but for them also to be enforceable. And this is something that of course there were amendments federally over a year ago that would have ensured just that. Now we hear that the Premier and the Agriculture minister support performance standards and service agreements, which is good.

But we had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in the review of the Act and with amendments of the Act, that were failed to be supported by this government and failed to be supported by the Harper Conservatives, Mr. Speaker. So that opportunity's been there.

Now that being said, we should be acting on this. And we should make sure that there's performance standards. We should make sure that agreements are able to be entered into, but most importantly that they're enforceable, that they're enforceable so that producers don't get the raw side of this.

Right now the way it works, the rail companies, there's all sorts of penalties that can be applied back to shippers, but there's no reciprocity to that and there's no penalties that return the other way. And we believe that when penalties are applied from performance standards that those penalties, those fines should actually be paid directly back to the shippers. Because they're the ones that are bearing the brunt because of the failure to perform of rail companies and the decisions and the failure to perform of that government and the federal Conservative government, Mr. Speaker.

We believe that there is important considerations around fleet size. I talked about the gutted capacity of the rail companies and there certainly could be a role for legislation to be speaking to the number of rail cars, the number of locomotives. There's all sorts of options to achieve that through locomotive leasing and otherwise, Mr. Speaker, and that's the kind of measures as well that we'd be calling for. As I say, there's been amendments to the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act* that have been put forward in the past that haven't been supported by Conservatives that could have been awfully helpful, Mr. Speaker, to ensure we never got producers in this province into the mess it is with this grain transportation crisis that this province is experiencing.

And in the meantime, there has to be some considerations. I didn't hear one word about the borrowing pressures on producers, the financing pressures on producers who are planning for the next growing season and in many ways who are in a spot that are not going to be able to be responding to the timelines of their borrowing requirements. And certainly there's a role for banks and credit unions on this front, but there is also an important role for federal and provincial governments. And I think of the federal government specifically where I know they have a short-term borrowing program. I believe it extends up to \$400,000 dollars and, you know, that's something that the federal government has control over here right now.

The federal government needs to be making sure they're

reviewing the terms of that short-term borrowing agreement to make sure that producers are enabled to prepare the inputs needed for the next growing season. And you know, when you look at this, this is as a result of actions of government, actions of rail companies that we're into this mess. Why should producers be left out to pay the tab or to take the hit for decisions that weren't theirs, Mr. Speaker?

And I know that one of the considerations on the borrowing piece from the federal government, I believe that \$400,000 that gets advanced, the 100,000 of that is interest free. And then the next, I believe the next portion up to 400,000 has an interest rate to it. And the producers themselves, you know, it's disappointing for them and I'm not sure very fair, Mr. Speaker, that they're left paying interest on that portion from the federal government, a federal government, Mr. Speaker, who has played a direct part in creating the grain transportation crisis or, at the very least, certainly not resolving the grain transportation crisis.

So as we look at all these measures, we need to make sure that the federal government is looking at its federal agriculture programs and its borrowing programs, and making sure they're making accommodations back to Saskatchewan producers that will allow seed to go into the ground here this spring and to make sure we have a productive growing season and not to be left leaving producers to be paying the tab, left out in the cold because of decisions and inactions of the provincial government, the federal government, and rail companies, Mr. Speaker.

So there's a lot of action to be taken, which is why we support here today, and we stand with government to support, albeit a rather open-ended motion, but we do support appropriate and effective legislative measures to ensure we can get our grain to market.

But that doesn't include, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, as was put on the table here today by the Premier, to be scrapping protections like the revenue cap that have been in place for producers. And it doesn't and it shouldn't allow a federal government to interpret that open-ended nature of the support here today, to mean any sort of measure they need to take. What we need to do is look at the common sense solutions put forward by producers, some of the ones that we've discussed here today, some of what we've put on the table, and we need to work together to make sure we can get the grain to market, here in this province and right across our country.

So as I say, Mr. Speaker, we'll be supporting the motion and we'll be looking for action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I enter this very important debate . . . and it is a very important debate. This is a debate that affects thousands and thousands of producers. It affects their livelihoods, Mr. Speaker. It affects their future and it affects the future of this province.

I listened to the speech just before me and I was a little bit disappointed in the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He

seemed to be going towards a bit of partisan . . . And I think this is something that we should be working together, not to keep going down the partisan route. So with the speaker that spoke before me, I would say I was disappointed, and I think the producers of this province would be a bit too. They would like this legislature to be working together to come up with solutions and be sending a solid message instead of trying to make this a little bit of a partisan avenue.

Now you know, I've been in this legislature a long time, and I know which side stands up for agriculture. But I'll just go back just to our side. On May 31st of 2013 the Ministry of Highways and Agriculture officials met with CP to outline the agriculture targets and Saskatchewan's plan for growth. They already knew that there's going to have to be changes in how grain is going to be marketed and moved out of this province. In June of 2013, we'd been working on the New West Partnership port capacity study. Also July 24th, the Ministry of Agriculture officials have met with Mark Hemmes of Quorum. The Minister and deputy minister of Highways have also met with CP in Vancouver in early October. We've been discussing this in caucus all summer and our officials and our ministers have been working.

[16:00]

We know this is a problem. It's an ongoing problem. I farmed all my life, and so coming from my constituency, this isn't the first problem we've had with the movement of grain. And as the farming practices are changing — and I've seen them change — every year we're going to be, we should be, and are growing more grain. If you just check the past 20 years, we're going to be growing more grain as farming practices are changing. That's a new normal norm and we know we need to address that problem.

I know the members . . . I've also heard, it's been brought to my attention about the Wheat Board. You know, the Wheat Board never worked on the transportation end of it. I can remember that they put two bushels out an acre. That's what you could take off the combine when I a kid. Then I think it went to three bushels and then it went up to maybe a call. But I can remember a 25 per cent call most years and not getting another call till March. So the first six months I had 25 per cent is all I could haul, and that was only then less than 50 per cent of what they'd give me of the price. And that's what farmers had to live on for six or seven months.

So saying the Wheat Board being gone, no, that was never the problem with the transportation system. This system has been to capacity for a number of years. I mean, naturally there's more production. There's more oil. This province is growing. This West is growing. So naturally there's going to be more rail movement.

I have a couple of mainlines that go through my constituency. I mean, I see oil cars moving on it constantly. I see cars coming in, like vehicles, trucks, cars, lumber moving out. If you go up on that Raymore line, you go on that Semans line, you go up around Watrous, I mean, in fact I usually . . . I'm getting calls from constituents who have to sit and wait for 20 minutes while a train goes by. And it's like every 20 minutes there's a train going down the main line hauling goods. This is the norm for Saskatchewan.

And this is why we have to address this problem. This is something we're working to the long-range future. One of them is south. We ship lots of things south to the States. You know, oil is one of them. You know, so there's no reason why grain can't move that way. And this isn't the first time that it's been brought up in the south. I can remember when the ports used to go on strike. We'd get a good crop, getting decent prices. What would happen? There'd be a strike at the port. And we're sitting there and sitting there and there's no movement of grain. No movement. Ships sitting there, you know. And there was always talk of, well, maybe we could ship through the States, go around the ports, you know.

So this is an ongoing issue, and I think this is an issue that we recognize is very important. And we have a team and we have a government here that has to work, and we have to work with the federal government because this is going to be a problem that's ongoing as we grow.

You know, I can discuss many of the constituents that I talk about, the farmers. You know, I just had a guy phone me. He had a durum call for December. They were going to take it in February; now they've kicked it back to April. Well he says, you know, April the road bans are on. He says, fields are wet. It's in bags. He says, I'll never get my semis in. I mean the bags are on a hill, but where he had to put the bags, you've got to drive through a couple of low spots. So he says, now I'm faced with the prospect. He says, I have moved some canola. Do I load up these bags? Do I bring them home now so that I can haul them in April and not be pulling semis stuck out of fields? I don't know if anybody's ever had a semi stuck, loaded with grain. It's not a lot of fun. So that's an extra cost, that's an extra cost the farmers are looking at, at all the time that needs to be addressed on here.

And I think the railroads aren't addressing this problem. I mean, I think they've ignored it for a number of years. And I think what we're doing and what the federal government is doing to work on an emergency program now, but to work on a long-range program because that is what's needed. We need to sit down with the grain companies, with the rail companies and say, listen, this grain has to go to port, and it has to go on time because it costs our producers money. They've lost, you know, you talk about the bases right now. I mean, the price is still decent on the coast, but our farmers are losing anywhere from \$1 or more a bushel. That's gone. That should be there. That should be in their pocket. They should be able to spend that because of the movement, non-movement of grain. And that is a very serious issue.

And this is going on, like as we go into 2015, they say it's going to be backed up. Well we grow another good crop, we've already . . . prospects are good. We have a very good snow cover out our way, as through most of our province. We had rain last fall. Most of the producers are expecting to grow at least a normal to above average crop again, and their bins are full. And also they're facing the financial crunch of it also. But never mind that this could be an ongoing problem.

So you know, I've had a lot of calls and so have many of the MLAs here. And they know that this is going to have to be addressed, as we move forward, with solutions. And this has to be a non-partisan, non-partisan issue. This is where all levels of

government have to work together to make sure that this goes on, and we can't be nitpicking about little partisan issues. And I think our Premier's been very fair in that, that he's been saying that this is non-partisan. We have to work with any party that is willing to. And I acknowledge the opposition for supporting this motion. I acknowledge that. That's good. We have to work together because this is one of the most important issues that's probably going to be facing rural Saskatchewan this spring and this summer and also as we carry on to the fall and the winter.

You know, as producers we've learned where we have to contract grain in advance. I mean I can remember when you just loaded up the one-ton and you went in, usually that afternoon, usually had to shovel it to fill it. Them days are long gone, and the companies have moved in that direction where they actually are moving towards they want you to contract two months, three months in advance. And I don't have a problem with that. Most farmers don't. It gives them security of what's going to be ahead, how they can do their planning to buy fertilizer, their seed, or what the money's coming in. But when they contract two months in advance and then two months come up and they can't move it, then they're a little upset. And I don't blame them.

You know, there is lots of grain that was contracted in November and October. And farmers will contract it early because they'll think maybe they might think a 10-cent loss or 15-cent loss on price to move it early, because to move grain in December and January in this country costs you money if it hits 30 below. We've had some really long, cold, hard winters. And if you're trying to run diesels and start augers and push snow, that costs you money.

Well right now many producers are doing that. Right now they're trying to move their grain in January and February in the coldest, most miserable months when they contracted it for October, November delivery. And that's why they're very upset about it, and I don't blame them. I'm upset myself as a producer. I don't like to haul grain in January or February. It costs you money. It costs you more money to move grain when it's colder than it does in the summer or in the fall.

And now as we go to spring you run into road bans. You run into wet roads. You run into where you can't get to your bins on account of very wet conditions. So those are the reasons that farmers will contract on a certain place or a certain area and plan. Or if you get custom work done, that way you can work to hire to bring in the semis to line up. Okay they'll say, the first week in November we're moving 10,000 bushels. Line that up with the trucking company. But right now it's like you go call by call.

I can remember on our line in Davidson every Monday is when the two trains come. We've got two terminals and you go there Monday morning. Did the train come? No, no. Why not? They didn't have an answer, the grain companies. You know, the rail companies just phone and said no, it's not coming. Obviously shortage of cars, shortage of power, which they call . . . That's a new thing, That's how they call about their units; they call them power now. When I was a kid, you know, you actually called it an engine. But they talk power now.

You know, and so, you know, I've talked to . . . I actually know

one guy that's an engineer, and he just says, yes. He says, we're short of power. That's the term he used. We don't have enough engines out there, he says. We're not . . . And he says, we're moving all kinds of commodities, just not grain. And I think they're ignoring grain a little bit. And I think they need to be reminded of that. And I think, and which we're working, knowing that this has to be a priority for them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, it's an issue that is not going to be solved very quickly because you're talking about monopolies. I noticed the members opposite talked about monopolies quite a bit. Yet I'm glad to see that they're not in that favour of them because apparently when the Wheat Board was there, they were quite in favour of monopoly. So hopefully they've moved away from that.

But anyways, this is a problem that is going to be ongoing, and it needs to be addressed as we move forward. And there is various ways of doing it. We have the delegation. We have our ministers that are working towards that. The knowing that there is different avenues; it's just not a one simple solution. I think it has to be good in conjunction of various things to get this grain moving, and to make sure that it's moving. And it's something that we have to work with the federal government because this is across Canada. The ports, whether it's in Vancouver or they're moving to the Great Lakes or if we move south to the States, I mean those are issues that are going to be dealt with a lot at the federal end, you know.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know our time is getting short, but I'm glad to get up to voice my concerns of my producers in my area, plus of Saskatchewan producers that this is a very important issue. And I think, knowing it from an MLA and the calls we're getting to the office, and I know when you're out and about, this is one of the most important issues right now that are facing the producers and the towns and cities and the villages across this province.

So I support the motion as it moves forward, and that we have to work together to solve this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is a motion by the Premier:

That this Assembly supports the federal government introducing emergency legislation to address the grain transportation backlog.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 16:12 until 16:15.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour please rise.

[Yeas — 55]

Wall
Draude

Morgan
Duncan

Stewart
Krawetz

Boyd	Eagles	McMorris
Cheveldayoff	Harpauer	Toth
Doherty	Norris	Reiter
McMillan	Heppner	Harrison
Wyant	Tell	Weekes
Elhard	Hart	Bradshaw
Bjornerud	Brkich	Hutchinson
Makowsky	Ottenbreit	Campeau
Wilson	Marchuk	Ross
Kirsch	Michelson	Doke
Cox	Merriman	Jurgens
Steinley	Hickie	Lawrence
Tochor	Moe	Parent
Phillips	Docherty	Broten
Forbes	Wotherspoon	Vermette
Belanger	Chartier	McCall
Sproule		

The Speaker: — All those opposed please rise.

[Nays — nil]

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 55; those opposed, nil.

The Speaker: — The ayes have it. Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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. I rise today to move second reading of *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013*. Mr. Speaker, the intent of the amendments are to improve timely access to mental health services for vulnerable people, support integration of mental health and addictions services and information sharing, and resolve governance and administration issues affecting the ministry and health regions.

Mr. Speaker, changes in the amendment Act include repealing those sections of the Act dealing with confidentiality and release of information and substituting *The Health Information Protection Act*, allowing for better collaboration among areas of health services in other ministries while still protecting personal health information; reducing the criteria for community treatment orders which allow for involuntary treatment in the community and increasing the period of time, the time period, of CTOs [community treatment order] to reduce barriers to treatment for very vulnerable clients; transferring the responsibility for licensing mental health approved homes from the ministry to the regional health authorities to align closer to day-to-day practice using the facility designation regulations under *The Regional Health Services Act* instead of *The Mental Health Services Act* to designate facilities; transferring the power to appoint regional directors of mental health and chief

psychiatrists from the ministry to regional health authorities to align with day-to-day practice.

Mr. Speaker, our government strives to improve the quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. The Ministry of Health is responsible for providing services to promote, preserve, and restore the mental health of Saskatchewan people. As this Assembly is aware, we are developing an inter-ministerial mental health and addictions action plan to better meet the mental health and addictions needs of the people we serve.

Mr. Speaker, the current Act is 27 years old, and many sections of the Act have not kept up with modern practice. The current Act reflects a time when central government provided mental health services that are now more community based and provided by regional health authorities. Amending *The Mental Health Services Act* will allow the ministry to improve access for vulnerable persons in need of timely mental health services, address operational issues for regional health authorities, and minimize the risks to the ministry involved in delegation functions that are more appropriately handled by the health authorities.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Mental Health Services Act, 2013*. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 127, *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013* 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: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to give a few brief comments on this particular bill, *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013*. And, Mr. Speaker, Bill 127 is a very important bill because a lot of people are paying attention to this particular bill as it has a dramatic effect on those that are seeking services when you talk about mental health overall. From our perspective, certainly as a party that is wanting to see many more improved services, we view this bill as something that is very, very important to us and to many of our people that speak to us about their challenges. And any way and shape and form that we're able to modernize some of the Acts that this government operates under, it is something that we will certainly undertake to do.

I think, Mr. Speaker, as we look through the bill itself there are many more of us in the caucus here, the NDP caucus, that will have different comments and different situations and certainly a different perspective on what the importance of this bill is and how we're able to make it a stronger and better bill as we undertake to make it the law.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the key things that we look at when we study the bills as being presented by the government is that, did they do proper consultation? Did they listen to the groups and organizations that are out there, that are striving to provide better services for their family members or for themselves or somebody close to them in their community or in their home? So, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the key things that we want to undertake as an opposition, is that there is an opportunity to make this a better, stronger bill by consultation and going to talk to some of these organizations and some of these people

that are impacted by this service. I think it's really important that we hear from them as well and that we take the time as an opposition, as we hope the government will do, to not only hear the consultation but to abide by the recommendations as a result of those consultations. So I think it's really, really important that they be transparent, that they be accountable, and that they earn the trust of the people that they're trying to provide services as defined under this particular bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, very quickly we see that they're shifting powers from the ministry to the regional health authorities which are able to give licences to approved homes. They're allowing residents, psychiatrists who are MDs [Doctor of Medicine] already, to admit patients and that could help improve the system. And of course they're modernizing the language from mental health centres instead of in-patient facilities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand from some of the consultations and groups and organizations and people that they've spoken to, that these are some of the ideas and concepts and issues that many of the impacted communities wanted to bring forward. And I think it's really important that we applaud their participation and we acknowledge the challenges that they have presented and we certainly, as our leader has indicated time and time again, from our perspective as an opposition if there's something that is being done properly with the proper consultations, with the proper outcome, then that is something that we as a caucus would support and that's one of the important messages that we want to give to many organizations that are out there that want to see improved services, especially in areas of mental health.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of issues that we want to pay attention to. There are a lot of different groups and organizations that we want to speak to. We want to make sure we monitor the government's progress on this bill. And the fundamental thing that I'll point out in my last few comments here is that if we're going to modernize the bill, if we're going to make sure that the bill is effective, Mr. Speaker, then this government has to give it more than lip service. They've got to put the proper resources, the proper team, the proper system in place so these families that took the time to give them advice can know and can appreciate that those services are there.

If this government can do that, Mr. Speaker, and as our leader said, we in the opposition are able to support initiatives of this sort, of this importance, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the key messages that I want to give to the people that may be listening and may be tracking this bill from the opposition's perspective as to what our input is, and certainly what our position is when it comes to Bill 127.

So, Mr. Speaker, a lot of issues are coming forward on this bill. We know in northern Saskatchewan that there are a significant challenge when it comes to mental health. We know that in many sectors of our provinces there are challenges when it comes to mental health. Many families, many centres, many communities, many cities have these challenges. So we've got to make sure we do this right, that if there's an opportunity to not only empower regional health authorities to address this, you've got to give them the right resources to become effective. And if they don't give them the right supports, Mr. Speaker,

then once again we're back to the same old Sask Party song and dance where they've consulted with people, they've moved this thing forward, but there's nothing to back up the actions required in any of these bills. And that's one of the things that we in the opposition are always worried about and that we always pay attention.

So again, Mr. Speaker, it is an initial few comments that I have. I know my colleagues have a lot of other comments they want to add on this particular bill, so I move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 127, *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 128 — *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2013*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 128, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2013*. I will be moving second reading of that bill later in my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we have an appropriate and effective way of dealing with essential services in our province. They're necessary to have that type of legislation so that in the event of a strike or a labour disruption that we ensure snow removal on our highways and that people can still receive treatment in our emergency rooms.

Mr. Speaker, we do not want to leave Saskatchewan in the position we see Nova Scotia in right now, having weekend sittings of the legislature in order to pass essential services legislation to ensure that home care services are still being provided, as home support workers went on strike Friday morning.

Mr. Speaker, most other jurisdictions have got essential services legislation, and we want to bring our province in line with the other jurisdictions in the country. It is important that we have a framework in place that allows essential services agreements to be reached and that legislation does not have to be passed on an ad hoc basis to ensure that essential services are not disrupted.

The new provisions in the employment Act are designed to ensure the continued health and safety of the public while providing unions and employers with the job action tools they need to resolve issues and ultimately reach collective agreements.

Firstly, negotiating agreements prior to the expiry of the agreement can be costly and unnecessary if parties are able to conclude an agreement rather than just dealing with the essential services agreement. So we have decided that essential services agreements will only be negotiated if an impasse in bargaining a collective agreement and mediation is

unsuccessful.

Second, we expanded the definition of public employer to include all employers that provide an essential public service. This was as a result of consultations which identified that some private sector employers provide public services that are essential. For example, emergency services in Saskatoon are privately operated compared to Regina where the services are provided directly by the health region.

Third, the new provisions will enable disputes to be heard by an arbitrator, arbitration board, or the Labour Relations Board. The hearing will commence within seven days of appointment or application, and a decision is to be rendered within 14 days from the conclusion of the hearing. The decision is binding on all parties and comes into effect 48 hours from being served.

The fourth provision enables the union to challenge all aspects of the employer's essential service notice. The employer is required to identify the essential service, classifications of employees, number of positions, and the location where the employee is to work.

The final provision, Mr. Speaker, and it's the most significant one, provides a process to resolve a collective agreement where a strike or lockout is ultimately ineffective, Mr. Speaker. Where ability to strike is being taken away, it is imperative that there be an alternative method of resolving the collective agreement put into place. Mr. Speaker, either party can apply to the Labour Relations Board for a determination as to whether the essential services agreement renders a strike or lockout ineffective. If determined ineffective, the parties must submit to binding arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, all of these changes are the result of extensive consultation that occurred in 2012 and 2013 with public sector employees and unions. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to move second reading of Bill 128, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2013*.

[16:30]

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 128, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to offer the initial comments that we have on this particular bill, Bill 128. And I want to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that this is one fundamental point that every government ought to listen to. And that is, you must make the effort and you must take the time to listen to the working people of Saskatchewan, because this is some of the things that they've been telling you from day one. They've been telling you from day one that it's important to involve them. They've been telling you from day one it's important to respect them.

And number two, number three, Mr. Speaker, it's important to listen to them because they are an essential part of government and delivery of services to the people of Saskatchewan and they appreciate and they respect that responsibility. And that's what

they requested from this government and they never got it from day one. They got an arbitrary government that went to war with working people. And that is something that, Mr. Speaker, the minister brought up earlier that was costly and unnecessary, costly and unnecessary to every single party, including the government, the working people, and the people of Saskatchewan.

Had you listened to the working people today, you wouldn't be going to the Supreme Court of Canada to get a ruling on how to treat your employees proper, Mr. Speaker. That is something that ought to be said time and time again, Mr. Speaker.

So once again I will tell that minister and the Government of Saskatchewan that it is very important. The number one rule is that you listen to the people of Saskatchewan, especially the working people, Mr. Speaker. They are the front and centre of the delivery of service of the Government of Saskatchewan, and this minister and that government chose to disrespect them and not listen to them. And that is a costly and unnecessary exercise that this government has gone to and has put many people through, Mr. Speaker, for no reason except because they believe that going to war with the working people is something that they want to do. That is part of their mantra, Mr. Speaker. That is part of who they are. And we say, shame on them, Mr. Speaker. Shame on them.

Mr. Speaker, already we see an amendment to *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* rammed through last year. Last year that minister and that government rammed through certain sections, Mr. Speaker. And why did they do that? What was the rush? What was the rush, Mr. Speaker? What was the rush? It's a fundamental question that we have on this side, and many working men and women asked, what was the rush? Why couldn't you sit down and deal with the working people who are an essential part of providing that service, the front-line workers who are very essential to provide that service on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

And at the time they're asked the questions: what was the rush? Why are you ramming things through without sitting down with the working men and women of this province in a very respectful, positive environment, Mr. Speaker? And this government chose not to do that, Mr. Speaker. They chose not to do that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important, what's important is the Sask Party track record when dealing with working men and women in this province is a terrible one, Mr. Speaker. It is wrong-headed, it is mean-spirited, and it's totally costly and, as they say, unnecessary.

Now we have to go to a national court process, a national court process to figure out how best to treat employees. So when a minister gets up and uses the buzz words of respect and uses the words of it's important to sit down with them, it's important to appreciate them, those all ring completely hollow with the working men and women because they know what they practise. What they practise, Mr. Speaker, is not what they preach.

That's exactly the problem. They say one thing on one front and do the exact opposite on the other front. And we've seen this act

before, Mr. Speaker. We've seen this act before, and I think the men and women of Saskatchewan, especially the working men and women of Saskatchewan, are getting sick and tired of that gong show, Mr. Speaker.

If you want their participation, the fundamental point is you must respect them, and the fundamental point is you must listen to what they have to say. You've got to respect what they have to say, Mr. Speaker, and they didn't do that. Full stop. Period. The Saskatchewan Party government did not listen to the working men and women who sat down, and they had every bit of opportunity to hear what they had to say and they chose not to listen. That is one of the fundamental problems that we see with this particular bill, Mr. Speaker.

And we look at some of the process that they've undertaken, where they said, we're going to do this and we're ramming it through. We're ramming it through. Come hell or high water, we're going to ram this through. Now, Mr. Speaker, what's important is that they did not take the time to again consult. They had a number of opportunities and a number of occasions to sit down, to sit down and chat, and chat.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here we are in 2014, we're back to the drawing board. Now had they used the fundamental principle of fairness, and had they been pragmatic in their approach as government, not bringing their philosophy into government, had they understood that this would have been a costly, long, drawn-out process to our court system, Mr. Speaker; had they understood that from day one, and had they taken the time to listen to what our working men and women had told them, we would not be in this position today, a full six, seven years after they've formed government, where we are back to the drawing board, where we're trying to figure out this Act.

And, Mr. Speaker, Bill 128, certainly from our perspective, still has a lot of work to it. But the fundamental point that we would make on this: they should have listened to the working men and women from day one — day one — and we wouldn't be in this situation now, Mr. Speaker, would not be in this situation to this day.

Now what I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, is that I do a lot of visiting in a lot of hostels, different folks that have gone to some of the hostels in our cities and certainly all throughout the province. And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of these people that work in the health care field, you see them every day as you go visiting. And you see the maintenance folks. You see the professional people. You see all the folks out there that are working as a team. And I can tell you, our hospital and health care system is run as proficiently and as professionally as you can get it, Mr. Speaker. And there's a lot of good, dedicated workers there.

Now we argue there's not enough of them because this government's been cutting health care on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker. And this is the same minister that has a right wing agenda from our perspective, trying to privatize not only our schools but our health care system. That's next on his radar. So how do we expect as a caucus and how do they expect as working men and women to trust that minister and that government on the labour front? They simply do not trust them.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we walk into health facilities, we see the dedication of our workers. And I'll tell the people of Saskatchewan this: there's a lot of really hard-working civil servants that work in the health care field that do good, excellent work. And they do it with great pride. They do it with great pride. They do it with great professionalism, Mr. Speaker, and they do it as a unit and as a team. And what we have to understand in Saskatchewan is if people are working together as a unit, as a team, they take good care in how they do their job. They represent the Government of Saskatchewan well. And, Mr. Speaker, they do this because that is their job.

And what do we do as a government? What they do as government, they turn around and they disrespect their team. They disrespect their input, and they don't take the time to listen to them. How does that make them feel, Mr. Speaker? That makes them feel not . . . It certainly it wouldn't make me feel valued if I kept on bringing some of these issues forward, especially if there's no grounds to have disrespect except for one fundamental flaw that that government has — that they like go to war with working men and women. That's what they want to do. They want to do away with the collective bargaining power that many of our health sector unions and other unions have in this province.

And I say, shame. Why waste that time? Why waste that time doing that? Because you philosophically don't believe in unions when the fact of the matter is the people of Saskatchewan I think totally support the collective effort of workers doing their job in a really sound, professional manner and working as a team.

What's wrong with that theory, Mr. Speaker? Nothing is wrong with that theory except across the way the Saskatchewan Party don't like unions. They want to kill them off. We know that on this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And when they bring Acts of this sort forward, our caucus and our members are going to pay very close attention to what they're doing. We're not going to let anything slide under the radar. And despite the rhetoric, on this side of the Assembly we're used to the rhetoric. Some of the rhetoric they say, oh there's more work, there's more work to be done. We're working on that.

Not once, Mr. Speaker, have they accepted responsibility for their ineptness in terms of a government. Is there such a word as ineptness? But if they are able to for once, Mr. Speaker, stand up and take responsibility and take leadership and stop trying to pass the blame. Stop trying to pass the buck, Mr. Speaker. And it gets so bad where they don't want to take responsibility for their role as government because we don't think they have the ability to govern correctly nor have they got the confidence or the experience. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's costly and it's unnecessary because we've got the Supreme Court of Canada figuring out how to properly treat your employees and not the government across the way, Mr. Speaker. And that's how sad this whole process has become.

Now from on this side of the Assembly, we are going to fight for the working men and women, Mr. Speaker. We are going to defend the professionalism of all our health care unions and all the people that work many hours in all kinds of weather conditions. And on many, many levels, Mr. Speaker, they're there for the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. And we

recognize them, and we on this side of the Assembly have absolutely no qualms about sitting down with them and making a deal to make sure that that service is not interrupted, that that service that they provide is respected and that we don't simply say that in the Assembly and do something totally different outside of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

That is not a respectful relationship. And we on this side of the Assembly call it what it is. And the simple fact is that they were never serious of working with the health unions. And their plan quite frankly is to continue fighting against them. And, Mr. Speaker, that's costly and that's unnecessary, and that's the message that we have on this side of the House to that team over there that is bent on trying to do away with the working men and women of our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on every front, on every front, we do not, do not look anywhere else for answers except for that government. They try and take us back and give us a history lesson. The bottom line is that government is in charge. They've got 49 members. They cannot shirk away from their responsibility. You make certain decisions. You better live up to them.

And we in opposition are going to tell the people of Saskatchewan that you will notice that that government never assumed responsibility for something that they'd done terribly wrong or something that they could not fix. And a good example of that today was on the debate on agriculture, Mr. Speaker. We seen how they now say, oh it's the federal government's responsibility. You guys knew this problem was coming forward and you didn't do anything about it. You didn't do anything about it. And if I was a farmer, I'd be really upset with these guys because they had record revenue and they didn't address the issue.

Now let's talk about the unions in this particular bill, as they had the opportunity from day one to sit down with our union leaders and our professional workers dedicated to their job to figure out how we would move this issue forward, this Bill 128, and they chose not to. They chose not to. So here we are, seven years later and we're saying to them, why didn't you listen from day one? Your actions were costly and they're unnecessary because you're bound by your silly philosophy that you have to go to war with working men and women of this province. And we say, shame on you. Shame on you for wasting time, wasting money, and wasting opportunity.

And that's one of the reasons, that's one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Assembly when they talk about unions and how all of a sudden they have this new-found concern and care for unions, we on this side of the House laugh our heads off because we know all it is is words from that minister and from that government. And those words do not match in any way, shape, or form to their actions to go to war with the men and women of this province.

Why waste that opportunity to build a long-lasting relationship with our working men and women? It's because they're bound by their philosophy to go to war. And we say that's a waste of time and that's a waste of resources. That's a waste of professional service that many of these workers have given Saskatchewan. For years they have dedicated themselves. Why waste that goodwill from them, Mr. Speaker, simply because

they're bound by their philosophy?

[16:45]

So on this side of the House we have a lot more attention that we're going to pay to this particular bill. I know many of my colleagues, in particular my member from Saskatoon Centre, has followed the bill process for the last seven years. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan and the NDP caucus are going to look squarely at the Sask Party government. You're government. You're making decisions. We are tired of your excuses. We are tired of you shirking away from your responsibility. We're going to call you on some of the activity you've undertaken, some of the mistakes you've made, some of the negligence that you have shown to many different groups, and the harm you're causing to Saskatchewan overall.

Our job is to focus on that government and what they're doing wrong and how they should clean up their mess. And as our leader says, if they're doing something right, we'll support them. But, Mr. Speaker, so far they've done everything wrong. They've done absolutely everything wrong despite . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And they laugh, Mr. Speaker. They think it's funny over there. They laugh. They laugh when people get laid off or when essential services gets interrupted. They think it's a big joke over there, Mr. Speaker.

They had record revenues. They had a booming economy, a growing population, and they messed up every other aspect they possibly can, despite getting those assets and those opportunities from the previous government, Mr. Speaker.

So again I say today that the number one fundamental flaw that they had on this particular bill or any union discussion is they should have listened to the people and respected the people that they're dealing with, and they never did. And here we are seven years later — costly, unnecessary process because they're bound by their philosophy to go to war with these men and woman that serve our province and serve our people very well.

We have a lot more concerns that we're going to express on this bill, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure I'm going to be given the opportunity to say more, and I will take the opportunity to say more. But at this note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 128.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 128, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 129 — *The Executive Government Administration Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Executive Government Administration Act*.

Mr. Speaker, along with its companion bill, *The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*, this bill consolidates the provisions of *The Government Organization Act* with the executive council provisions of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*. It also incorporates the provisions of *The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991* and *The Federal-Provincial Agreements Act*.

The new legislation will remove any confusion about the organization of ministries and the assignment of ministerial responsibilities. The following changes are being made to these Acts from the current legislation.

First, legislative secretaries will not need to be reappointed every year. That was a requirement that simply added unnecessary paperwork. As well, regulations establishing ministries will not be subject to review by the legislature. This exemption is not often granted, but because it's the prerogative of the Premier to determine the organization of government, it is appropriate in this case.

Another change is that the appointment of advisory committees to ministers will require cabinet approval in all cases. Presently this approval is required if the advisory committee's appointment is for more than one year. This will provide more accountability and oversight.

Federal-provincial agreements will not require cabinet approval unless they require an expenditure by the government of more than \$50,000. This is consistent with agreements under section 18 of the new Act.

Mr. Speaker, all department Acts, such as *The Department of Justice Act*, are being amended to remove the word department from their title, change all references from department to ministry or minister, and remove references to things like annual reports, seals, and staff.

As well, redundant grant-making and agreement-making powers are removed as they will appear in *The Executive Government Administration Act*. Exceptional grant-making and agreement-making powers will remain in their respective Acts. *The Financial Administration Act* is being amended to eliminate the Investment Board and provide the treasury board can have non-ministerial members. This is consistent with all other cabinet committees.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of *The Executive Government Administration Act*.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 129, *The Executive Government Administration Act*. 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. Again I'm very pleased to be able to stand today on behalf of the opposition to give our initial comments on this particular Act, Bill 129, an Act that talks about the administration of executive government of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, and I would certainly encourage folks to correct me if I'm wrong, the executive government of Saskatchewan is what we would probably call the Premier's

office, in the sense that he would be the central figure, and I think in a lot of the executive government of Saskatchewan language. And I think when you start talking about conferring more power to the Premier's office, it begins to really ask a number of questions, Mr. Speaker.

And obviously from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, again, trust is a really, really . . . It's a real challenge for us in the opposition when we see some of the activities of this particular government and we begin to ask ourselves, well what is this bill about?

Bill 129 is really talking about a very complex bill, and it's going to replace a number of Acts governing executive government responsibilities. And a lot of people in Saskatchewan would like to know, I think, is how many responsibilities does Executive Council have or the Premier's office and the cabinet have when it talks about executive government choices? What exactly are those responsibilities, Mr. Speaker? Is it to set power rates? Is it to determine the number of MLAs? Like who does all the decision making around executive government?

And that's one of the important things that we have to do in opposition is to try and shift through all the wording, to try and shift through all the layers of bills that are coming forward to us and to try and figure out what is this government up to on Bill 129.? What exactly are they trying to achieve here? And, Mr. Speaker, from our initial blush and looking at this particular bill, it is a very complex bill. And they're going to replace, as I mentioned earlier, a number of Acts governing executive government responsibility. We want to know, we want to know all the implications. What exactly is the Premier conferring upon his office and Executive Council, which is called the cabinet? What exactly is he trying to do here?

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, what are the implications for the departments? Are we saying now that the ministers across the way are now just figureheads, that everything is going to go through the Premier's office and all the decisions are going to be made by him and three or four other people? And the other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that, how come there are so many changes made simultaneously? What is that all about? There are changes from the different Acts, Mr. Speaker, that have implications on how different departments will operate. We want to know what those implications are, what those changes are. Has anything been left out, Mr. Speaker?

What is the quest for power under this particular Act that this Premier is trying to seek, Mr. Speaker? What consultations has the Act undertaken? And to the stakeholders, have they been involved at all, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what this particular Act is going to actually do? So again you look at the net effect is that there's a very wide net of laws that are impacted and affected by this bill. We want to know in the opposition what exactly are those impacts. What changes are going to occur and what new powers may be granted to Executive Council and at the Premier's office as a result of this Bill 129?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would hope, I would hope that if you look at the importance of consultation on some of the major changes, that this bill implies that there be some good consultation, not only with the cabinet, but with the people of Saskatchewan so

they know exactly what the bill is impacting.

So I think it's important from our perspective. Again I will point out Bill 129 that talks about the administration of the executive government of Saskatchewan, which is the Premier's office and cabinet, I'm assuming, that this bill is going to replace a number of Acts and it's going to replace a number of different players that have different powers and different roles. So we want to know what exactly is this bill going to implicate, what exactly this bill is going to affect, and, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of questions on exactly what this bill is trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, we always pride ourselves as an opposition to talk about being very transparent with the people of Saskatchewan. And I think it's incumbent upon this government to first of all explain to the people of Saskatchewan what executive government is all about. Is it the Premier's office and cabinet? And what does the bill imply? What is the bill going to impact? How are other departments within the government, how are they going to be impacted? These are some of the things that we immediately . . . Our alarm bells go off when we see bills of this sort that are not really inclusive of the people of Saskatchewan. They're kind of sketchy, Mr. Speaker, and they certainly bounce over some of the major, major challenges.

So we want to make sure and we want to take the time to go through this bill, word by word, and see exactly what the plan is that that government has under Bill 129 that confers special powers or greater powers to the Premier's office, Mr. Speaker.

So I think we want to be able to take the time to do that. And we all know in Saskatchewan that when we looked at some of the Acts, some of the Acts that the province has, and this is what's really important, some of the acts will use the phrase . . . I will give you an example: the word shall. In some of the Acts the word shall would appear in a number of the Acts that talked about certain powers. And then there's another part of the Act that will put, may. So there is a difference between the word may and the word shall, because the word may gives somebody the opportunity to decide and the word shall is you have no choice but to do the particular directive under that Act.

So we want to be able to see whether there is a number of wording changes in there that actually gives the Premier's office more power, give the people of Saskatchewan less scrutiny, and really, Mr. Speaker, is not an effective way to be accountable, transparent, and respectful to the people of Saskatchewan. And that's why Bill 129, we are going to pay very, very close attention to this one because, Mr. Speaker, we have alarm bells going off left, right, and centre here in terms of what they're trying to do here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we would hope, we would hope, Mr. Speaker, that if this bill were to impact, say, for example, discussions with the federal government on the grain transportation challenge that we have in this province, when you have empty ships waiting for our grain in BC, off the coast of BC, when we have a customer saying, we're not going to get Canadian wheat anymore; we're going to go to the States now . . . Mr. Speaker, once you lose a customer, it's going to be very hard to get him back.

So the people of Saskatchewan are sitting here and from my vantage point in northern Saskatchewan I'm saying, well I hope this Bill 129 would give the Premier the directive to go and talk to the federal government and tell them, you don't have a choice. The option here is not you may find a solution, the choice is you shall find a solution and you need to find that solution now. And that's what's the important part of the wording, Mr. Speaker, in some of these bills. And quite frankly I think that the Saskatchewan Party dropped the ball on this one and the producers of this province are going to make them pay, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I would ask that the member return to the bill at hand, not to a motion previously decided in this House. I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And that goes to the powers of the Premier's office which directly relates to Bill 129, when they talk about respecting the administration of the executive government of Saskatchewan. My point being is what particular powers does this Act confer upon the Premier's office to be able to be an effective leader for our province? And this is where the questions are as to whether they would have been able to respond to the agricultural crisis that we have in the province. And that's the connect that I would make, Mr. Premier.

So I think the most important thing again goes back to, what exactly are they trying to do with this particular bill? What is their agenda? What are the powers they're trying to take away from some of the other cabinet folks that are around the room? What are some of the things that they want to do without public scrutiny? What are some of the things that they're omitting? What are some of the things that they're forgetting about? How about their consultation? The list goes on and on and on in terms of the questions on this particular bill, and we are going to take the time as the opposition to reach out to stakeholders, to look from within, from our own research team, to see what exactly this government's up to when it comes to Bill 129, Mr. Speaker. And rest assured, we will take that time.

Now I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that the bill itself has a number of subsections and again, you look at the wording. It is quite frankly . . .

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

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

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