



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

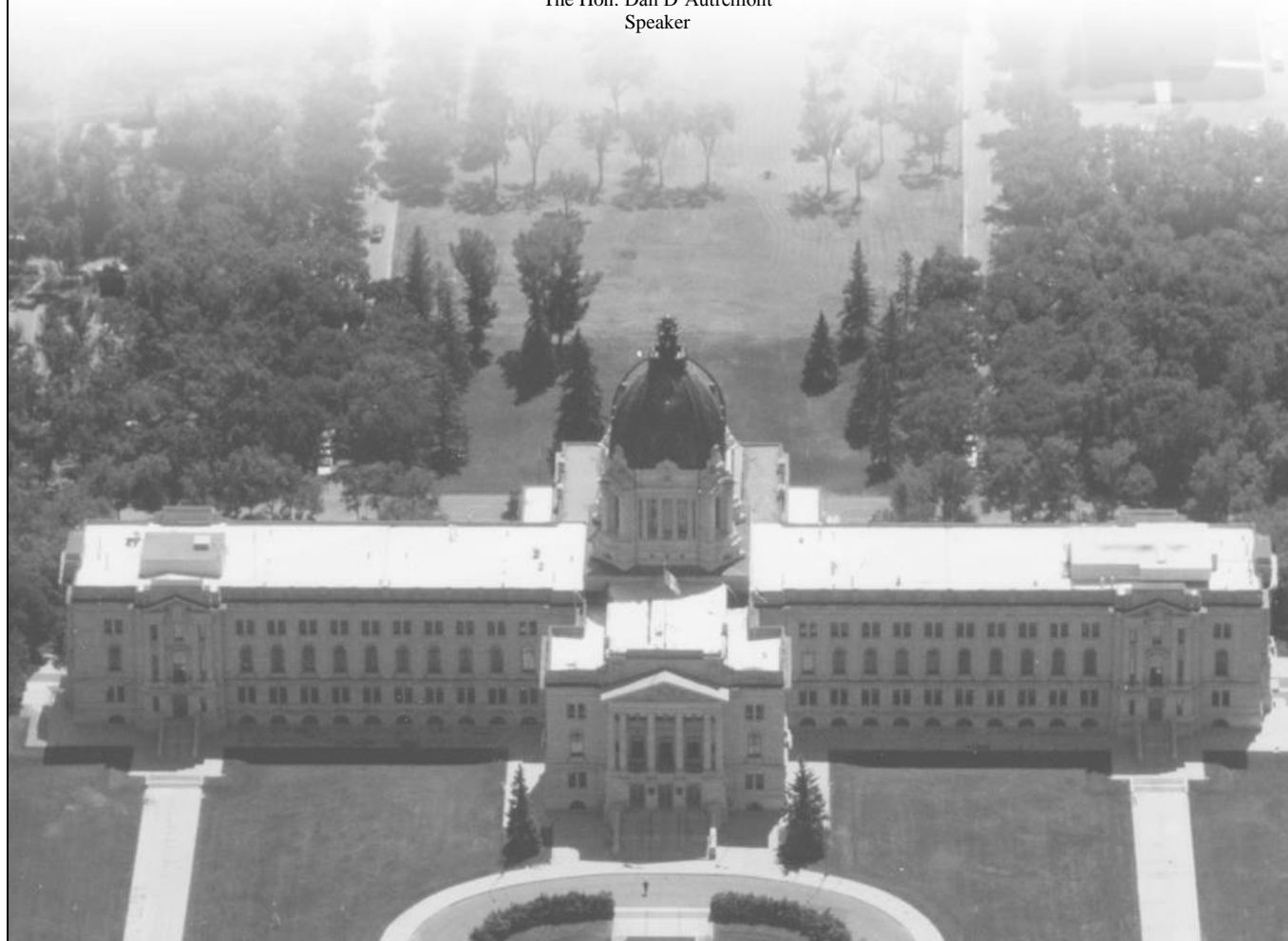
of the

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
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Doherty, Hon. Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
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Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
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Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
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Hutchinson, Bill	SP	Regina South
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
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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
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Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
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Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, for an extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce a number of people today, starting with a gentleman who's no stranger to this Assembly. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Duane McKay. Duane is executive director and fire commissioner for the province of Saskatchewan.

But with Mr. McKay today, we have a number of young people. There's a group of young men and women from Wesmor Community High School in Prince Albert. I'm going to introduce them; I'll ask them to give us a wave when I call your name, please. We have Creedin Daniels, Kirsten Michel, Brandy McCallum, Shane Mike, Dolton Larivere, Keenan Roberts, Sandy Anderson, Alyssa Jobb, and their teacher, Tyson Fetch. Mr. Speaker, these young men and women are students in the brand new high school emergency services response training program in Prince Albert.

This week, Mr. Speaker, is Emergency Preparedness Week, and as part of that week and as part of the new high school program, this morning these students toured, along with Duane, the emergency operations centre. And they had an opportunity to take part in a training program with Mr. McKay and his team. From all the reports I've heard, I had a chance to talk to them briefly during lunch hour, I think they enjoyed it immensely.

Mr. Speaker, the high school emergency services response training program was launched by our government last December in Wesmor and St. Mary's high schools in Prince Albert. During that three-semester program, these students learned about several areas of public safety: just for example, firefighting, search and rescue, emergency medical service, policing, leadership, team building, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

The group has now completed the first class or level 10 of the program, and I'd like to commend them for their interest in and their commitment to this program. Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that some of these fine young men and women after they've graduated will either potentially choose a career in public safety or possibly use the training that they've had in other capacities,

in volunteer capacities such as volunteer firefighters in their community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to welcome these wonderful young men and women to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister and welcome these leaders to their Assembly here today. Certainly I want to welcome Fire Commissioner Duane McKay to his Assembly, no stranger to this place. And I want to recognize his efforts and certainly the many that ensure safety, peace of mind, and protection for communities across Saskatchewan, often at very vulnerable times in the life of a community, in the lives of families. And I know your service and your commitment, your leadership is valued.

It's a pleasure as well to have the group of students from Wesmor Community High School from Prince Albert here today. These young leaders, and leaders that will with some certainty provide a lot of service and leadership in our province for many years forward, certainly it's an honour to have you in your Assembly here today. The program, the emergency response program, sounds like a very important program. I know that we support these efforts.

We thank the school board. We thank the teacher that's here today as well. We thank all the partners in delivering that program. And it's a pleasure to welcome these leaders to their Legislative Assembly.

And while still on my feet, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to welcome corrections workers from across Saskatchewan. We have many communities represented here today, including Kelvington, including North Battleford, including Prince Albert, including Saskatoon, including Regina, including Moose Jaw. It's a pleasure to have these individuals come to their Assembly here today. We thank them for their service and leadership to our province, the careers they've built within our province, all their other contributions back to the community.

And certainly we join with them in their concern as it relates to government's agenda as it relates to privatization of the corrections system and the concerns that come with that sort of privatization — the threats to integrity, the threats to safety, the threats to rehabilitation, and so many more, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members though of this Assembly to welcome these fine leaders to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery today, we have 12 grade 12 students from Glaslyn Central School. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Brian Goota, chaperone Janelle Stoebich, and bus driver Mervin Pritchett. These people have driven some five, five and a half hours to be here today, and I'll be meeting with them after today's proceedings. So I ask all members to welcome them to

this Assembly.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce two individuals seated in your Assembly, or in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, in the Assembly, and that's Pauline Paterson and Sheryl Rosom. And to me they're known as Auntie Sheryl and Auntie Pauline, sisters to my dad, Mr. Speaker. Auntie Sheryl lives here in Regina and visits from time to time, but Auntie Pauline doesn't live in Regina and tells me that the last time she visited the Legislative Building was when her father, my grandpa was an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] sometime in the '60s. So it's a bit of a walk down memory lane for Auntie Pauline. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Pauline and Sheryl to the Assembly today. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a number of individuals who have joined us in your gallery. Today with us to recognize Maternal Mental Health Day are members of *The Smiling Mask* team. And I'll maybe ask them to give us a wave when I introduce their names: Carla O'Reilly, Tania Bird, and Elita Paterson. They do a great job and some important work to raise awareness for maternal mental health, and I'm pleased that they're joining us today. And I'll have an opportunity I hope to speak with them not long after question period ends this afternoon.

Also joining us today is Elita's partner, Ward Paterson; as well, Tanya Condo, who is from the Mother First working group. And so I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister on behalf of the opposition to welcome the women from *The Smiling Mask* team in recognition of Maternal Mental Health Day today.

As a mother myself, I've had many friends who've suffered from postpartum depression. And raising awareness I think is absolutely critical, and your work is very appreciated. I know from my friends' experiences it can be incredibly debilitating, lonely, and as your smiling mask reveals too, that I think people on the outside have to feel like they have to appear a certain way. But the inside, it's a very different story.

So on behalf of the opposition, thank you so much for the work that you're doing in raising awareness about postpartum depression and maternal mental health. So with that, I ask my colleagues to join in welcoming you to your legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery I'd like to introduce 48 grade 4 and 5 students

from Langham Elementary School, accompanied by their teachers Danielle Olson, Ben Dunville, and educational assistant Barb Leite. The chaperones are Ken Digneau, Erin Brown, Sheila Wiens-Neufeld, and Monica Thiessen. I look forward to a photo later, and a visit with you. Please welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to recognize someone in her Legislative Assembly, Delphine Melchert. She really likes to work in the background, but the genesis of the emergency preparedness program started with Delphine and Duane together. I worked very closely with her in my community of Prince Albert, and she is a stalwart of the community as a director of the community networking coalition. I ask all my members to join me in welcoming Delphine to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to join with the member opposite and welcome a leader in this province to education in this province, Ms. Delphine Melchert, to her Assembly. This is somebody who has provided great leadership in the community of Prince Albert, but not just leadership in the schools of Prince Albert but leadership to schools all across the province.

She's the executive director of the Saskatchewan community schools council, their association. I'm not sure I have the right term. But her leadership is important to so many across this province, and it's my privilege to welcome this leader in education to her Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you. I would like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Delphine to the Assembly. We know of the good work that is being done and look forward to continuing having discussions. And I want to thank them, not just for being here but also for their contribution to education of our children, and wish to join with the member opposite in welcoming them to their Assembly today.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature the people who were brought to us by the Legislative Library to read at lunch hour. And so I'm very pleased to welcome James Daschuk who has written the book, *Clearing the Plains*; Paul Wilson who's won the poetry for his book, *The Invisible Library*; and Lisa Bird-Wilson, who won the Book of the Year Award for *Just Pretending*. And I ask all members to welcome them to this legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Again being polite gets me last. I'd like to also introduce, it's my pleasure to introduce and welcome Saskatchewan authors seated in the Speaker's gallery: Lisa Bird-Wilson, James Daschuk, and Paul Wilson. These authors are distinguished recipients of the Saskatchewan Book Awards

this year.

Over lunch today in the Legislative Library, they treated us to readings from their award-winning books. This event was sponsored by our own Legislative Librarian, Melissa Bennett, also seated up in the Speaker's gallery. I'd also like to acknowledge the Saskatchewan Book Awards especially Joanne Skidmore, Carol Todd, and Nickita Longman for organizing the readings today.

Please join me in congratulating these authors on their book awards and welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of anti-bullying. And we know that bullying causes serious harm, and the consequences of bullying are devastating, including depression, self-harm, addictions, and suicide. And we know that other provinces have brought forth legislation and various tools and programs, showing swift and effective government action, and we know that this government is not doing enough to protect Saskatchewan youth. And we know that bullying can occur within schools but also through social media, cellphones, and through the Internet, also known as cyberbullying, and bullying is a human rights issue, one of safety and inclusion. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

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

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

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to unsafe conditions on Highway No. 1 just east of Regina, sort of the area that connects through Balgonie, White City, Emerald Park, Pilot Butte, of course, that connects there, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners are calling for immediate actions to ensure safety for those using the highway, and they're calling for actions because quite simply too many lives are at risk at this point in time.

And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan, until the overpasses are built along this corridor, immediately install traffic

lights at appropriate locations along Highway No. 1 between Regina and Balgonie, immediately reduce speeds to appropriate levels within this corridor, and take steps to ensure that speed limits are enforced.

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

These petitions today are signed by residents from, I believe, many parts of Saskatchewan, but specifically Regina, Emerald Park, White City, and Balgonie. I so submit.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the petition on Highway 102, north of La Ronge. This road is a major highway used by the mining, the forestry industry, many students travelling to the community of La Ronge for schooling. The road also provides residents that go out trapping, fishing, blueberry and mushroom harvesting as well as medicine plants, many residents travel out on these roads to do that and provide that. It also provides tourism access for camping, sports fishing, and for many activities that are in the North, and the beautiful North that people come. So, Mr. Speaker, the people would like the government to hear and pay attention to this. And I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that the repairs and maintenance on the La Ronge north road, Highway 102, is important to northern residents and must be undertaken immediately.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by many good people of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on Highway 155, which is the main highway for northwestern Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to commit to repairing and upgrading Highway 155.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are primarily from Ile-a-la-Crosse and Patuanak. And I so present.

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 safety and rerouting of heavy-haul truck traffic on Dewdney Avenue. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners state that:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your

honourable Legislative Assembly call on the provincial government to immediately take action as it relates to the unacceptable danger, disturbance, and infrastructure damage caused by heavy-haul traffic on Dewdney Avenue west of the city centre, to ensure the safety and well-being of communities, families, residents, and users; and that those actions and plans should include rerouting the heavy-haul traffic, receive provincial funding, and be developed through consultation with the city of Regina, communities, and residents.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by good citizens here in the city of Regina. I so present.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I present a petition about the fact that we have public corrections facilities both for adults and young offenders in Saskatchewan. The government intends to privatize the food services in corrections, and they are failing to listen to the workers that are working in this area, and they have not looked at or provided the public with their rationale for doing it. So the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan may be pleased to cause the government to cancel its privatization in the corrections and young offenders facilities in Saskatchewan.

This is signed by people in Regina, Foam Lake, Lang, Lumsden, and Balgonie. I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to properly address the grain transportation crisis. And the undersigned want to bring to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the following: the grain transportation crisis is hurting many producers across the province as last year's record crop sits in bins, causing a huge financial crunch on producers who have limited cash flow to pay their many bills and loans. And in the prayer that reads as follows, they:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan push for the federal government to require the rail companies, by law, to have the capacity to handle large volumes of grain like this year's crop in a timely and efficient fashion; and to push for open running rights on the railway system to ease future backlogs and introduce more competition into the grain transportation system.

And, Mr. Speaker, this comes from individuals from several communities in the province: Canora, Melville, Prince Albert, Wakaw, Saskatoon, Regina, Canora, La Ronge, and several other communities, Humboldt being amongst them, and North Battleford and Estevan. I so present

The Speaker: — Before we proceed, I would like to remind

guests in our galleries, they are not to participate in the events on the floor and that includes applause.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

National Day to End Bullying

Ms. Campeau: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When children grow in a supportive and loving atmosphere, the explorations of their youth allow them time to discover their talents. In whatever enterprise they find their passion, we know that each child in our province has the potential to change the world if only they believe in themselves as much as we do as their parents. This is why we are so pleased to join the Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada today as they lead the National Day to End Bullying.

Belonging and acceptance — this is the message the Boys & Girls Clubs are asking Canadians to tweet, post, and discuss over the course of the day. Positive relationships that encourage children to be confident in themselves and their abilities make a tremendous difference and should surround students throughout their lives.

Our government is taking action across the ministries with 815,000 in new funding to implement Saskatchewan's action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying. This includes funding to RAP [restorative action program], a project that brings a professionally trained worker into Saskatoon classrooms to teach conflict resolution, leadership, and positive relationship skills.

We take the matter of bullying very seriously, so we commend the Boys & Girls Club and their sponsor, CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce], for taking the initiative to help our province's children and youth. I ask that all members join me in recognizing their efforts today as we take action on the National Day to End Bullying. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Boys & Girls Clubs from across the country call on Canadians to celebrate a day of belonging on the National Day to End Bullying. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada have been working with partners to raise awareness and recognition that bullying is a growing issue facing all Canadian youth. Every child has the right to safe and supportive places where they are listened to, respected, and valued.

The Boys & Girls Clubs are aiming to shift the dialogue around bullying from negative to positive, focusing on a young person's sense of belonging to lessen the harm of bullying. Young people today benefit from feeling like there's something to belong to, and that this initiative aims to support our youth in finding it. CIBC and BGCC [Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada] have partnered on a campaign designed to support positive behaviours which include developing abilities and skills, building confidence and competence. They have taken a proactive approach in addressing bullying, and we can learn

from their example.

Mr. Speaker, bullying comes in many forms, and we are reminded to challenge these negative behaviours by highlighting the importance of acceptance and belonging from the earliest possible age. Mr. Speaker, I call on all members to recognize Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada's National Day to End Bullying and to support their integral goal of creating safe, supportive environments for our youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Steps for Life Fundraiser

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the great opportunity to fundraise and walk with my daughter Courtney in the Threads of Life annual fundraiser, Steps for Life.

Mr. Speaker, Threads of Life was the first organization around the world to offer peer support programs to family members who are living with the consequences of a workplace tragedy. This great organization provides family support program, regional family forums, links to professional support services, advisory support for workplace investigations, and the opportunity to promote workplace injury prevention and awareness.

Steps for Life is a 5-kilometre walk which raises funds to support Threads of Life programs and services for families who have suffered from a workplace fatality or a life-threatening injury or occupational disease.

Our government in partnership with the Workers' Compensation Board has formed WorkSafe Saskatchewan. Our goal is simply stated in two words — Mission: Zero. For us, Mr. Speaker, the only acceptable number of workplace incidents, injuries, and illnesses is zero.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Threads of Life for hosting this great event and for all the work that they do to support families who have faced workplace tragedy. I'd like to thank all those who participated in the walk and donated to Steps for Life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Nuit Blanche Arts Festival

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize an important new cultural event coming to our province. Nuit Blanche is a free, nighttime arts festival that showcases and celebrates art and culture across the country, and I'm proud to announce that Saskatoon will now be among the Canadian cities who will host such an incredible event. The first annual Nuit Blanche is set to take place this fall on September 27th. I look forward to seeing the city streets and venues filled with contemporary art installations, dance, theatre, music, and poetry.

Last night, organizers held a Nuit Blanche Saskatoon artist and enthusiast information night. Attendees had a chance to get a sneak peak of the artist showcases, meet and ask questions of the organizers, and independent artists and volunteers now have the opportunity to apply to participate.

This festival provides an opportunity for local talent to shape and enhance Saskatoon's landscape with physical installations, live performances, and sculptures. I encourage all artists to consider applying for the chance to contribute their work. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud the city of Saskatoon will be joining other Canadian cities as host to this cultural festival.

I would like to congratulate the executive of the first board of Nuit Blanche in Saskatoon, and that's Sean Shaw, Tara Reibin, Sam Lock, and Brett Suwinski. They have a 15-member board that are working hard to bring this festival to Saskatoon in September.

I would also like to recognize the important work of this diverse team and everyone else who's bringing the Nuit Blanche experience to Saskatoon. I have no doubt this important event will enrich the city and the arts scene alike.

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

Long-Term Care Facility Opens

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week, along with the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, I had the opportunity to attend the grand opening of the new Rose Villa long-term care facility in Rosetown. It was a momentous day for the people of Rosetown and surrounding area, and it was another exciting milestone for our province's health care infrastructure renewal plan. Rose Villa accommodates 54 long-term care beds and offers a comprehensive range of health services, larger private rooms, and state-of-the-art equipment.

Mr. Speaker, this project couldn't have happened without the cooperation of municipalities in the area, and we want to extend our gratitude to the towns of Rosetown and Zealandia, the villages of Harris and Mildren, and the RMs [rural municipality] of Harris, Mildren, St. Andrews, Pleasant Valley, Marriott, and Mountain View. The Rosetown and district health foundation was represented Friday by Chairman Marcel Dubois. The foundation played a huge role in helping to fund the local share through all of the hard work of their volunteers.

The success of this project demonstrates our government's commitment to renewing health care infrastructure in the province and ensuring our seniors are safe and comfortable. It's another example of how this government is putting patients first by ensuring that all our communities and health care providers have the right equipment and the best environment to provide quality care.

Mr. Speaker, I thank and congratulate everyone involved in this terrific project for Rosetown and surrounding area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Trades and Technology Centre Sod-Turning

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to attend and bring greetings, along with the Deputy Premier and Minister of Advanced Education and other dignitaries, at the sod-turning ceremony for the new Trades and Technology Centre at Parkland College in Yorkton. The ceremony marked a significant milestone for the college, which has been dedicated in their vision and commitment to this project.

The new Trades and Technology Centre will increase the number of graduates by over 350 per year in many highly skilled areas that are needed in Saskatchewan's workforce. This is vital for our region, as we are currently experiencing significant economic growth and the need for skilled workers has never been higher. It will also make it possible for students in the Yorkton area to learn closer to home and ensure that Parkland students can continue to develop the skills needed to meet their education and employment goals and make the transition from learning to earning. The Parkland College has done an outstanding job of raising support in the region, truly setting the example in bringing projects like this to reality.

Our government is honoured to commit \$10 million to the Trades and Technology Centre and partner with the college, the city of Yorkton, the community, and corporate partners. This commitment shows recognition of the regional need for skills training in the surrounding area by helping to reach the goals of our growth plan and the province.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the college and Yorkton region for bringing this project to fruition, and thank all parties who helped make it happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mental Health Awareness Week and Maternal Mental Health Day

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce May 5th to May 11th is recognized as Mental Health Awareness Week, and today has been proclaimed Maternal Mental Health Day in Saskatchewan.

Mental health issues directly affect one out of every five Saskatchewan residents, and one in five women experience depression in pregnancy or postpartum. Our government recognizes the importance of providing appropriate and timely access to mental health services. Over \$200 million in funding is targeted to mental health services for those in need.

Mr. Speaker, this government has also committed to develop a 10-year, inter-ministerial mental health and addictions action plan. This is the first time as a province that we have undertaken a cross-sectoral approach to address the many complex issues presented by mental health and addiction challenges. Mental health and addiction actions plan commissioner Dr. Fern Stockdale Winder is completing her extensive public consultations soon and will be providing her recommendations to government later this year.

During this very important week, I want to remind my colleagues that we all have a responsibility to raise awareness of mental health issues and to work to reduce the discrimination and stigma associated with mental illness. I'd like to encourage Saskatchewan families who may be struggling with mental health or maternal mental health to reach out for help and support. Thank you.

[14:00]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Health Care and the Lean Initiative

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know this government has a lot of intimidation tactics to keep nurses and other front-line health care workers quiet when it comes to the negative implications of lean on patient safety and on quality of care. This government's even gone so far, Mr. Speaker, to send out speaking notes and suggested testimonials to front-line workers.

But Joan Neufeldt has been a nurse in Saskatoon for 42 years. She's seen many trends come and go, and she's still working in the health care system. And she's not afraid to speak out about the latest flavour of the month because she has never seen, Mr. Speaker, a pet project that is as ridiculous, as wasteful, and as expensive as this government's obsession with lean. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: will he listen to Joan Neufeldt's common sense, or will he continue to dismiss the concerns from front-line health care workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we're very interested in the input from front-line workers in health care, not just about lean but about the system in general. In fact shortly after coming to office in 2007, the then minister of Health undertook a patient-first review of the health care system that very much centred on input from patients, obviously, and family members of patients, but also from those who are stakeholders in the system, those who work in the system. Lean is all about listening to front-line workers. We know 40,000-plus health care workers are going to have some concerns out there, and we want to be attentive to those. We want to be improving the lean process, Mr. Speaker. We know that lean has already saved more money than it has cost. It has led to improved patient care.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's not a flavour of the day, Mr. Speaker, except on the benches opposite. I think just in the last little while WestJet's announced they're moving to a lean process. We have major hospitals in the United States that are leaning out their system. We have organization after organization that recognize the benefits of lean, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the benefits here already, acknowledging that we need to be listening to front-line workers such as the individual that has been raised by the Leader of the Opposition. We'll continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, a car on the assembly line is different than a patient in a hospital bed. A suitcase, Mr. Speaker, going into a plane, is different than a senior who's in a long-term care facility, Mr. Speaker. Joan Neufeldt says there's a bunch of people that keep saying that everything will be so much greater with lean, yet she keeps seeing, Mr. Speaker, patient outcomes that are not better. And that experience, Mr. Speaker, is backed up by the government's very own data through the Health Quality Council, which shows that quality of care and shows that patient satisfaction is actually getting worse.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: how can he keep dismissing these concerns from front-line health care workers, especially when the concerns are backed up by the government's very own data?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we're not going to dismiss any of those concerns as they're raised with us either by the members opposite or by health care workers themselves. Neither will we dismiss the support we've received from nurses, Mr. Speaker, from doctors from the Saskatchewan Medical Association, for example, who support the transformative work of lean. We won't disregard their comments.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have hospitals, health care institutions like the Virginia Mason Hospital, who are engaged with the same contractor frankly, who believe that we can improve patient care. I have a number of new examples to present before the House of the benefits of lean with respect to patient care, with respect to a better system, Mr. Speaker. If the deputy leader wants to listen to those or heckle from his seat, that would be his choice. But we'll be happy to canvass those improvements in the subsequent questions.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, common sense has gone out the window with this government's approach to lean. Joan talks about tape being put on the desk where lean consultants think that the phone and the stapler should go, Mr. Speaker, as if nurses are in grade 4 and are clueless about such matters. She talks about lean consultants, Mr. Speaker, taping off areas where they thought supplies should go but would have blocked vital access to fire safety equipment. It's absolutely bizarre and ridiculous.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier: why are we paying a US [United States] consultant \$40 million, paying Japanese senseis \$3,500 per day, to have them come to Saskatchewan and tell nurses where the stapler should go, where the phone should go, and that in fact they should block the exits with the tape on the floor for equipment, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the lean contract that's referenced by the member opposite has already identified more savings for taxpayers than the total contract will cost, Mr. Speaker. Moreover, we've seen improved patient care

experiences and improved efficiencies in the system as a result of lean. I would just ask the member . . . What he's said is serious and what the nurse is saying is very serious. We would like to know the specific example that's being referred to with respect to the blockage of traffic in a health care facility. Would he please provide that specific information?

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

Mr. Broten: — Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, the nurses spoke up and said, my goodness, you can't block the fire exit with the tape on the floor and put equipment in the way of necessary fire equipment. That's the common sense that nurses provide every day in the units, Mr. Speaker.

Joan Neufeldt has been through the kaizen basics training. She's been in the Health Quality Council additional programming, Mr. Speaker. But she has definitely not drunk the lean kaizen Kool-Aid like this government has chugged it, Mr. Speaker. She thinks the government has allowed the lean process to become a cash cow for the US consultants, for the Japanese senseis, Mr. Speaker, while ignoring, ignoring the needs on the front lines. She's speaking out and she's demanding better for patients and demanding better for residents in care facilities. And the vast majority of nurses and health care workers, Mr. Speaker, agree with her.

My question to the Premier: when will he start listening to the concerns from the front lines? When will he admit that he's gone way overboard with his lean obsession? When will he finally cancel the fat cash cow contract and put the focus on the front lines in the hospitals and the care facilities where it's needed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, no matter how much more excited the Leader of the Opposition gets, the fact remains we've already identified more savings than the contract costs.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, because of lean, in the Saskatoon Health Region adult patients are spending less time waiting for an X-ray at the Royal University Hospital. Prior to the changes from lean, patients waited over an hour to complete their procedure. They're now waiting just 22 minutes, Mr. Speaker. Regina Qu'Appelle's musculoskeletal clinic continues to serve patients to a greater extent than it did prior to the lean improvements. Prairie North pediatric therapies has seen more patients every month as a result of lean changes. By creating a new standard work for clerical and pediatric therapy staff and reorganizing the therapy room, the clinic's productivity has increased from 38 to 80 appointments per month, Mr. Speaker.

On top of the improvements that the Minister of Health has dealt with, on top of the fact that it's already saved more money than it cost, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to seek improvements in the system. We're going to continue to hire more health care workers, Mr. Speaker, as we have when we inherited a human resource deficit in the health care system, a capital deficit in the health care system from members opposite when they were the government. We're going to seek to improve those things, Mr. Speaker, going forward.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier keeps parroting the words of John Black that it's saving so much money — the same guy who is cashing the \$40 million cheque based on this Premier's lean obsession.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the nurses. It's not just the Union of Nurses that's raising concerns — and that ought to be enough for this Premier and this government to pay attention — but it's the Health Quality Council's own data, Mr. Speaker, that shows that this Premier's and this government's lean obsession is not working. The HQC's [Health Quality Council] own data shows that adverse events are up. The mortality rate is up. The infection rate is up. And patient satisfaction is down. My question to the Premier: how can he dismiss his government's very own data?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we've always got to check against the facts when we have questions from the Leader of the Opposition. The numbers that we have already presented to the people of the province into this House in terms of savings coming from lean have nothing to do with John Black. They don't come from John Black, Mr. Speaker.

But this information we just received today is from the same member who stood up and castigated the Government of Saskatchewan, the current Government of Saskatchewan for, in the name of lean, throwing out Christmas trees in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. The same member did that. The next day we found out the Christmas trees got thrown out by the NDP [New Democratic Party] government, Mr. Speaker. He's got to check the facts. More money saved than the program has cost. Improved patient experience in the system, Mr. Speaker. We will listen to front-line workers. We have not stopped adjusting the lean process. We'll continue to do that. But we are determined to improve health care for Saskatchewan people by hiring more health care personnel, by building new capital in health care, Mr. Speaker, and by looking for efficiencies in the name of better patient care.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely bizarre that this government's go-to line now on why they need lean is because they can't clean out the basement of a hospital, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely bizarre that that would be the evidence that this government would go to to say that a \$40 million contract with a US consultant and \$3,500-per-day senseis is in fact the smart approach and a wise approach and a good use of tax dollars.

My question to the Premier: when will he listen to the front-line health care workers, admit enough is enough, and cancel the fat cash cow contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — All right, Mr. Speaker. Let's revisit the case that the member has just raised in the preamble to his question — the case of the missing Christmas trees in Moose Jaw that were thrown out in the name of lean. That is true. The trees

were removed from a storage facility in Moose Jaw because of a lean initiative, a lean initiative that happened under the watch of the New Democratic Party government. A lean initiative that happened under the watch of the father of lean, the member for Regina Lakeview, Mr. Speaker. That's the facts. These are the facts. Well the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition's chirping from his seat because he's wrong again and he's trying to cover over the fact with volume.

Mr. Speaker, here's some of the other results of lean. In terms of distributing the wrong medication, we've virtually eliminated errors in the mental health unit at Five Hills. This is another good example. There used to be 17 a year before we went through this process. There's one too many because there's only one now, Mr. Speaker, but one per year versus 17 before that. Defects in blood work have been reduced from 35 per cent to zero at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre. This is because of lean in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so yes, we will listen to front-line workers. We're going to seek to improve it. But, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake: we will not stop looking for ways to improve patient care. We'll hire more health care personnel; we'll build more health care facilities; and we'll seek to make sure the system is more efficient, Mr. Speaker.

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

Living Skills Program

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the living skills program offered by SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] in Moose Jaw is an employment readiness program designed to help adults with diagnosed disabilities enter the next stage of their lives. It's a highly regarded 36-week program to help prepare these adults to be independent, self-directed, and work in engaging careers in the community. And, Mr. Speaker, it's been very successful. That's why it makes no sense that this program was cancelled last week. To the minister: why was this program cancelled?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll take notice of that question and get back to the House.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should listen to the question. I'll go with a second question. Patty Lembke joins us here today with her daughter Shelley. Shelley is one of the successful graduates of the program. She excelled at the living skills program and is now working in the medical field here in Regina. Her mother, Patty, says the whole family was upset that this great program has been cancelled.

The living skills program focused on the basics: helping these adults be independent, navigate urban transportation systems, follow proper nutrition, and generally get ready for a career. Shelley and Patty want to know why this government would not support the living skills program. To the minister: what's the answer to this?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The appropriate minister will be happy to meet with the individual, but we'll take notice of the question and get back to the House.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, Patty and Shelley are joined in the gallery by Kim Skidmore, and Kim is a foster parent here in Lumsden. She's raising foster children, some of whom, or upon graduation, would be a perfect fit for the living skills program at SIAST. But because this program is being cut, Kim isn't sure what to do. Kim wants the best for her kids that she's had the privilege to help raise, and she thinks the living skills program would be perfect for them in the same way that it's helped other young adults like Shelley. But now she has major concerns because this important program has been scrapped. Again to the minister: what do they have to say to Kim today?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll look into this, but we'll be happy to meet with those in the gallery today and we'll take notice and get back to the Assembly on this.

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

Food Services in Corrections Facilities

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, whatever isn't nailed down gets privatized under this government. It's piecemeal privatization. The government wants to contract out food services in corrections and youth custody, the facilities in Saskatchewan. It will affect 60 or more staff who will lose their jobs in the province's corrections and youth custody facilities. To the minister: why is the food service and youth custody in corrections facilities not considered a core function of their operations?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to providing a safe, secure, effective, and efficient correctional system. Our correctional services and programs in our facilities have not been looked at or under analysis until now. But the period of time in there, Mr. Speaker, is 23 years. Sixteen years were under the members opposite.

We must ensure, and I'm sure the taxpayers of the province agree, that every dollar that is being spent is for our best outcomes. Every program must be for our best outcomes. And no final decision has been made to contract out our food services. The earliest a decision is expected is fall 2014.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the government said that this wasn't about the cost of providing safe food services in these facilities. They originally told the media, food didn't meet the corrections system's "core business opportunity."

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why the government sees its corrections and youth custody facilities as businesses but that's the phrasing they used. In many of these facilities, food service workers assist with rehabilitation. They help those incarcerated or in youth custody to get job skills they need to find work when they re-enter the community once again. Can the minister guarantee that a private sector provider of food services would be able to offer that same program for rehabilitation?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier and I will repeat, no final decision has been made on whether we're going to contract out our food services in our institutions.

Mr. Speaker, an independent review was done of our current food service delivery model to ensure that our services are aligned with our core business. The review showed us, Mr. Speaker, that there are currently five different food service delivery models in practice across the province. Our operational improvements and efficiencies may be achieved by delivering consistency and centralization. And again, Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the government has said, and has just said right now through the minister, that they did a review about the system across the province in seven different correctional institutions. But when we filed an FOI [freedom of information] request to get the report, the government denied its release in full. When we asked in committee yesterday, the officials said it would not be released.

The government is using this report to justify their privatization agenda but they won't release it or any part of it. If this report is so compelling that the province has decided to privatize these jobs, why is it afraid to release this report? Will the government table the food services review report today, especially since she's used it in question period to answer the question?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — So answering on behalf of she, we want to ensure that every dollar is being spent efficiently and effectively in corrections, Mr. Speaker. The report I am referring to is advice provided to executive government and the member opposite knows full well that that information is privileged information, Mr. Speaker.

Programming with respect to our food service delivery in our correctional facilities, the programming and the job skills training will still be offered. And if the member took the time to look, he would see that that issue is in the RFP [request for proposal].

Security is a priority, Mr. Speaker. Co-operation with the ministry in all security matters was even highlighted in the RFP. I do suggest that the member take a close look at the RFP before he stands up for his next question.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, people's lives are at stake in this whole question. There's many, many people concerned about the system. We're also concerned about the rehabilitation of the people who are inmates in these various facilities.

Mr. Speaker, that minister has used that report in this House to answer a question, and I think it is incumbent upon her or upon the Premier to make sure that that report is public. I ask the minister again: will you release that report? Will you table that report so that we can see why you're making this unexplainable decision?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to further elaborate on some of the questions the member has asked earlier — and of course we were in committee yesterday, Mr. Speaker — that food services in correctional facilities is already being contracted out in facilities in Alberta, BC [British Columbia], and Ontario. Mr. Speaker, this is nothing new.

The report that was commissioned was done to ensure that we are delivering the right service at the right time for the expected outcomes. And the people of this province expect us to deliver effective programming services to our inmates for public safety reasons. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, when a minister answers a question in this House and uses material and uses it again and again, I think it's incumbent upon her to provide that material to this legislature to justify the answers that she's given. Mr. Speaker, this affects many people in this province, and I think that there is a strong onus on the minister and on the Premier and on executive government to make sure that this legislature gets the information that it needs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that minister again: will she table the report on the food services in the correctional service today?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, a request for proposal was issued to determine if there is interest and ability to provide food service to our facilities. Mr. Speaker, it will be an open RFP, and anyone can submit a proposal for consideration. This RFP was closed on April 22nd, Mr. Speaker, and no final decision has been made.

Mr. Speaker, I must also add that we, the ministry officials, are working very closely with the affected union of the employees in our food services in our correctional facilities and meeting on a regular basis, keeping them informed and advised. In fact this

started just prior to this particular issue being discussed.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to look for the best ways to provide the best service to the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Bill of Rights for Seniors' Care

Ms. Chartier: — We keep hearing about how this government continues to neglect the basics in seniors' care. That's why, at the start of this spring session, I brought forward the NDP private member's bill *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act*, which would be an important step to start fixing the basics in seniors' care facilities.

The government said it would take its time to review the NDP's legislation. To the minister: he's had over two months. Has he reviewed the legislation yet? And will he commit to pass this important bill this session?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity, as I hope all members have, of looking at the member's private member's bill that she put forward in terms of special care homes. Mr. Speaker, I think that when I have a look at the bill, I think that there are some deficiencies in terms of the things that the bill speaks to, in fact that our guidelines that we have in place actually go further than the bill. And I'd be pleased to talk about them this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, in the bill it calls for care plans that must be developed. However the bill was silent on whether or not care plans need to be followed up and changed and amended in terms of the care that the residents would require based on a changing condition. Our minimum guidelines state that every three months those care plans need to be amended. So that's one area that the bill was deficient.

The other would be that residents have the right to have the most recent routine inspection report of the facility. And the members opposite will know that they amended the Act to take out the ability for the ministry to inspect those facilities. So in fact the reports that she's calling for in her bill, the NDP got rid of the ability for the ministry to actually do those inspections.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this government removed minimum care standards from the regulations, and the guidelines that this government has for seniors' care facilities clearly are not working. We hear repeated examples of that, Mr. Speaker. This government's own Law Reform Commission recommended a legislated bill of rights for seniors' care facilities. To the minister: why is this government ignoring the advice of its own Law Reform Commission and refusing to take the important step to improve seniors' care in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I think, Mr. Speaker, I've already, think I've already laid out why I will not be supporting the private member's bill put forward by the member. I think that our special care home guidelines in fact go further than what the member had offered in her bill. And as well I hope that all members have the chance to look at the bill in fact, including the member who introduced the bill.

In an interview in a scrum outside of the rotunda when the bill was introduced, a reporter asked her, and I quote, "What specifically is in here that isn't in the guidelines?" and her answer was, and I quote, "The laying out of a minimum hours of care." Mr. Speaker, if the member looks at her own bill, the words minimum, hours, and care do not actually appear in her own bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the chairperson of the Human Services Committee.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report that it has concurred certain estimates and to present its fifth report. I move:

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

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

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

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the chairperson of the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

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

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

[14:30]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

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

Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the House recess for 10 minutes in order to prepare for Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — There's really no need to recess at this time for Committee of Finance. I will just leave and the House may proceed to get ready.

Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair.

[15:00]

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Chair: — Okay. I will call the Committee of Finance to order. The business before the committee is the estimates for Executive Council. The first item of the business is the main estimate for Executive Council, vote 10, found on page 55 of the Estimates book.

Before I call the first vote, I would just like to make a few comments. I would like to describe the process that we will engage in here this afternoon. It is a bit different than our standing committees. And for members and for those people watching — and I know our Pages had some questions about the process here this afternoon — in Committee of Finance only the minister, in this case this afternoon it will be the Premier, that is the only person that can answer the questions. Officials do not answer questions in the Committee of Finance, which is unlike our standing committees.

The other important difference is that in this committee all members are voting members of this committee. And the third difference that members will notice, the viewing public will notice, is that when members enter the debate they stand,

whereas in our standing committees you sit. So in this case you'll only be recognized if you stand.

So with that explanation, members, I will invite the Premier at this time to introduce his officials. I will then call the vote, and then I'll invite the Premier to make his opening comments. So, Premier, if you would like to introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks to all members of the committee who have joined us here today. I look forward to the discussion that we're about to have, the debate perhaps we're about to have with members of the House, with members opposite. And I'm pleased to have senior officials of the Government of Saskatchewan join me today to help, assist with the provision of full and complete answers to the committee, Mr. Speaker, wherever possible.

And I'd like to introduce Doug Moen, who's the deputy minister to the Premier, the deputy minister of Executive Council, and therefore the senior civil servant in the province of Saskatchewan, someone who has served in the civil service of our province spanning three different administrations. And I certainly value his counsel and input for today.

On my right is my senior adviser to Executive Council, Reg Downs. On the other side of Mr. Moen is the associate deputy minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Wes Jickling. Just behind him is James Saunders who's the associate deputy minister, cabinet planning and Executive Council; Bonita Cairns is the executive director of corporate services, to answer the financial questions in the budget, the actual budget of the Premier's office or Executive Council that members may have for us today. And then immediately behind me is Graham Stewart. He's the executive director of House business in Executive Council. I thank them all in advance for their work today.

The Chair: — Thank you, Premier. The business before the committee today is Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01), central management and services.

**General Revenue Fund
Executive Council
Vote 10**

Subvote (EX01)

The Chair: — Premier, I would invite you to make your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, time's limited, so I'm going to waive that opportunity. I will have a chance to debate, discuss, elements that we wish to get on the record and answers we wish to provide, but we waive that in the interests of getting right to questions.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair, first of all for the introduction to the committee and some of the ground rules for those that are watching at home, and perhaps just some information for some of the members in the Assembly as well.

Welcome to the officials who join us here today. Thank you for your role in ensuring that the process goes smoothly and the right information is provided. And thank you to the Premier for his welcome and allowing us to cut right to the chase in terms of the questions.

I just briefly want to say, this is a very important time in the democratic process in our Assembly and in our province, Mr. Speaker, a time where the opposition can ask questions to the Premier, hopefully a good number of questions and hopefully a good number of answers as well. So it's very important. It's unfortunate that government's only giving three hours for this time, but without further ado, I'm happy to get to the questions.

My first question, Mr. Speaker, is does the Premier have any concerns about the independence of the Social Services Appeal Board?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I think three, by the way, just in terms of the length of time, I think three hours is what was asked for by the opposition. I may be wrong in that, so I don't want those watching the proceedings to think we're trying to limit Executive Council estimates. I might be wrong on that, but I think that's what was requested by the opposition, and that's what we've agreed to.

I would say this, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the particular question: the answer would be no, we would have no particular concerns about its independence.

The Chair: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Well actually three hours was all that was offered up, but that's not the main point of the discussion here today, Mr. Speaker. The Social Services Appeal Board is a very important board within Social Services. It's an independent tribunal. And it's an opportunity for clients to ensure that they have been treated fairly, in accordance with *The Saskatchewan Assistance Regulations*.

So it's the final step in a three-tiered appeal process under the regulations. So if the client disagrees with the decision, or if the ministry disagrees, the next step is actually the Court of Queen's Bench. So it's a significant and important board within the ministry, absolutely.

The pamphlet that's handed out to social service recipients says specifically that the Social Services Appeal Board is ". . . made up of citizens who are independent of the ministry." But we know, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Social Services appointed her very close friend and her travel partner to the independent tribunal.

So my question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Premier. Has the Premier spoken to the Minister of Social Services about her decision to appoint her very close friend and travel partner to the Social Services Appeal Board?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just looking over the qualifications of the individual that the member is raising with respect to the board. And they're impressive in terms of her experience in social work, specifically in the area of child protection, work that she has been undertaking since 1989. She's been working in the social work field.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, on this matter I can't help but take the counsel of the Minister of Social Services who has served the province in an extraordinary way in that capacity. And she has complete confidence, notwithstanding the fact that this individual is known to her, complete confidence in her independence and her ability to bring her considerable skills to bear in the interests of those who are appellants, Mr. Speaker, and do it in an independent way, notwithstanding any other intersects they had in terms of knowing each other.

So Mr. Speaker, as I look at the CV [curriculum vitae] and précis here, I just think that this individual is qualified to serve in the capacity to which she was appointed at the time and her interest in the field. Her work and experience in the field goes back to 1989.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue actually isn't the qualifications of the individual who has been appointed to the board. I do not know the individual CV in fine detail, Mr. Speaker, but that's not the issue at hand here. And the issue actually isn't even whether or not political appointees should be on boards. Perhaps this individual could serve on a health region board or some other board in a different ministry.

The issue here, Mr. Chair, is whether someone who is a close friend of the minister, someone who is a travel partner to the trip to Africa should in fact be the individual who's the Co-Chair of the very important tribunal that reviews the decisions of the ministry that obviously that the minister is responsible to oversee.

So that's the real question here in my view, Mr. Speaker. So my question to the Premier: would the Premier think that it's inappropriate for the minister and her close friend to have any conversations related to the Social Services Appeal Board? Would it be appropriate for the minister to talk to her friend about issues related to the Social Services Appeal Board?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The answer to the question is no, it wasn't the occurrence at all with respect to the minister's activities and the Chair of the board.

I would also point this out for the House, and this is important, I think. During this individual's time on the appeal board as Chair, there was the overruling of the minister's ministry decisions 26 per cent of the time. This is 2 per cent higher than previous Chairs. So this, I know it's being alleged here by the Leader of the Opposition. But, Mr. Speaker, I think we should get this on the record in the interests of, at the very least . . . I mean we're all politicians. We're all subject to — we should be — to scrutiny and to these questions. But this individual's not here to defend herself from the member's allegations. So let's

get it on the record here that during her time as Chair, she overruled the minister's team officials 26 per cent of the time. This is higher than it was previous.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Premier to table the appeal record during that period of time. What the minister said when this was brought to light, the minister said, "They gave me a list and I said if all people are the same, as competent, well then put Rita on the board."

The issue isn't about the competency of the individual in question. It's about the judgment to have a very close friend as the Co-Chair of the committee, of the tribunal reviewing the decisions of the ministry, Mr. Speaker. That is the conflict and the question. My question was to the Premier, and it was, does the Premier think it's inappropriate for the minister and her friend to have any conversations related to the Social Services Appeal Board?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — There is still an inference in the member's question that somehow the relationship between the Chair and the minister influenced her decisions. That's clearly where the member's going, I think. And fair enough, we're in estimates. He can ask whatever he wants. If he has an example of that, that would be serious. And I think it should be brought before members of the House, and I would like to have access to that information because that would be highly inappropriate. But, Mr. Speaker, there's no evidence to that effect.

He has switched back to the competency question. What I offered him in the last answer was the fact of the matter, which is this individual has actually presided over more decisions that overturned ministry recommendations or decisions than her predecessor. And so I'm not sure where else the member wants to go. I mean there are . . . There's an interesting example from November of 2002 involving the minister, then MLA, when she was asked about an appointment by the New Democrats of a Ralph Nilson who is the former dean at the University of Regina school of kinesiology and health studies, as the Vice-Chair of the new Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, an independent body in the province of Saskatchewan. The Mr. Nilson in question happens to be the brother to the member for Regina Lakeview and highly qualified.

In fact ironically enough, the critic for the Saskatchewan Party that was asked about this appointment was the Minister of Social Services in question, and she said she wasn't . . . This is quoting the article now, Mr. Speaker, in *The StarPhoenix*. She said she wasn't concerned that the Health minister has appointed his brother to the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, the Health minister appointing someone to the Health Research Foundation. Why? And here's the quote: "I would imagine his brother is a qualified man," she said.

So we've already established, and I think with agreement from members opposite based on the CV that I've read, that this individual is competent. The other question would be, quite rightly, and the member's at least asked it or inferred it or got to

its edges, the question would be, well what about the independence of this individual, notwithstanding the competency? And by the record, where we have more decisions overturned by this Chair than by the predecessor, Mr. Speaker, it would indicate that there was a great deal of independence and competence in the appointment of this particular individual.

[15:15]

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it's important to note this is an appeal board. This is an appeal board that reviews the decisions by the ministry. If one was a Social Services client, Mr. Speaker, that a ruling had been made and that individual felt like the ruling was not fair and was not the right outcome, that individual would want to ensure that absolutely there was no appearance of any sort of conflict between the individual who has been appointed by the minister and the minister. I think that's a very fair and reasonable thing for anyone appealing to the process. It's an appeal process where the next step is actually going to court. It's not like this is some minor, low-level tribunal. This is very important.

The Minister of Social Services said on April 15th that she has not had any discussions with her friend about the work she does on the Social Services Appeal Board. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier: has the Premier asked the Minister of Social Services whether that's actually true? Has he asked the minister if she has said any such . . . if she has had any such conversations with her very close friend who is now the Co-Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — You know, it's interesting. I'm not sure where the member's going with this, the line of questioning. Because if you extend it to, for example, the judiciary, you run into an interesting proposition where judges, before they're judges, would be well known to ministers, notwithstanding what party's in power. Some would be more than well known, would be friends and acquaintances. And yet there is a confidence I think that we have when those judges were appointed, either by the previous administration or by ours, that they will take their role, the role of independence and the principle of blind justice to the bench. And we have that confidence because that has been I think by and large the great experience of the province of Saskatchewan and indeed across our country.

But it's also true that they would have been known prior to their appointment by ministers. I would expect that Justice ministers would count among their friends those that have potentially been appointed to the bench, federally and provincially in different political parties. And I don't think we would question their independence because I think those people then, when they take up their role as a judge, leave whatever of those relationships behind them in the adjudications and the decision making that they have to proceed with as members of the bench.

So you know, with respect to the member's direct question, there's every assurance from the minister that any discussions

with anyone involved on any of the appeal processes . . . And by the way I understand there was a meeting of some of the regional partners and the provincial group to talk in general about social services issues, not just with respect to any Chair but a number of them, to talk a little bit about improving the process in general. So sure, there's general discussions that happens, but nothing obviously specific to a case.

And I want to correct the record as well, Mr. Chair. In fact the chairman in question ruled against the government in favour of the client 33 per cent of the time, and the previous average I think had been about 31. So it's still the 2 per cent difference, but fully a third of the time, the Chair was ruling in favour of the client. You know why? I think, Mr. Chair, without knowing the details of those cases, I think that was the case because she took her duties very seriously and left whatever relationships behind her, much as a judge would do. And for \$10,000 I think a year is what these Chairs get paid, took her job very seriously, deliberated the case as it was presented to her, Mr. Chairman, and in a third of the instances, higher than previously, she's decided in favour of the client and against the ministry.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Will the Premier table that list of rulings?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I'm not sure about the privacy issues around sharing specific rulings, but I think written question 346 had these numbers in it.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier is doing . . . well getting rather twisted up as he's trying to rationalize how it's appropriate that the minister appointed her good friend and travel partner as the Co-Chair. But the Premier should listen, Mr. Speaker, to the minister's very own words when she was first confronted on this, and at that time the minister said, "It's probably better if they're not a real close friend of the minister." And that's coming straight from the minister, Mr. Speaker.

We've received information, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Social Services has had inappropriate conversations with her friend that she appointed to the Social Services Appeal Board. In fact, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers actually paid for at least one of those conversations in early February. My question to the Premier: does he know anything about that?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The answer is no, I'm not aware of that. If the member has some information, we'd be happy to look into it. I'd also point out that the questions with respect to appeals decisions by this individual versus a predecessor's is in the annual report and available to the member.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we're here for a considerable amount of time yet, not enough, but a considerable amount of

time, and there are enough political staff in the minister's office, in the deputy minister's office, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that they can work with the Ministry of Social Services to quickly review the expense claims put forward by the minister's friend and they can send in that material, Mr. Speaker, to the Assembly so that the Premier is able to provide the relevant information, and that it's in front of him. So we'll be coming back to this issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier said that he reviewed all of the travel expenses from his ministers and that there were only two, two concerning incidents involving the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Social Services, incidents that we've discussed here in the Assembly over a number of days. My question, Mr. Chair, is to the Premier. Did the government actually review all of the travel that has occurred under this government in order to confirm that there were no other inappropriate expense claims?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Just with respect to the last set of questions again — and the member said he's coming back to it, and that's fine, and we'll debate it then — but I want to highlight another example for members of the committee about someone who would be known to members on both sides, who would I think be a friend to members on both sides, but whose independence I don't think anyone would question.

Yesterday the Children's Advocate presented his report — Bob Pringle, a former member of the Assembly for the New Democratic Party and also a friend to members on this side of the House certainly I would say as well. I think we came together as a House and realized though Mr. Pringle's ability to do his job, to set aside any particular friendship or affinity he had for members on either side of the House, and represent the interests of children in this province. And I think the report yesterday was an indication that he has done exactly that, Mr. Speaker. Because I think when people assume these duties, again whether it's the Chair of the appeals board or whether it's the Children's Advocate or a judge, I think they leave these things behind them. And the record I think reflects that that was the case with this individual who, yes, was known to the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the review of government travel went back to 2007. It's how we're able to determine, by the way, that our travel . . . I'm pleased to report to all members of the Committee of the Whole, including members opposite, that government travel is down over 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in terms of our last year versus theirs. I'm happy to report that the use of government exec air is down significantly as well. These things matter.

Although, Mr. Speaker, here's another thing that matters. It's important that we tell our story. We inherited a situation where there was not a great deal of international engagement, some towards the end by Mr. Calvert, I think, but not a great deal of international engagement, especially in Asia. And we have set a priority of doing that. Not opening trade offices. Almost every other province has trade offices around the world, especially other Western Canadian provinces or members of the New West Partnership. We have a joint office in Shanghai with the New West Partnership, and that's it pretty much. And the rest of

it is contract support on the ground when we get to those countries and also trade missions. We support STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership] to go to places like . . . That's the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership. We've increased their budget because we believe engagement is important.

I have travelled to these places as well, regularly, and will do so again because I think it's an important part of what we do in government. For example I hope, I think that our visit three years ago to Bangladesh and then our subsequent action on return from Bangladesh was a bit of an assist. And I think Canpotex and the federal agency CCC [Canadian Commercial Corporation] deserve most of the credit. But I think we had a former Bangladeshi in the ministry. I think our visit and a visit that I had with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina helped reopen the conduit of Saskatchewan potash to Bangladesh. We had made a sale to that country in 1992 and then it stopped. And so we'll make no apologies for travelling and getting the message out, Mr. Speaker.

If you drive by Moose Jaw, there's a big facility called Agricore. They're from Singapore. In many ways the contact for that was made on a trade mission. We met again when we were in Singapore this fall.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to go open up those markets, and we'll spend some taxpayers' dollars doing it. But even having done that, we'll come in at a lower level than was the case with the NDP. And more importantly than that, we're going to ensure that we're careful about the spending, Mr. Chair. And there'll be a debate now that we have a brand new disclosure process, in part because of questions asked by members opposite. There'll be a debate every time there's a report about whether this trip was worth it or that trip was worth it. Fair enough. We're prepared to have that debate. We're prepared to move to a step of disclosure and transparency greater than we've ever had.

But we're going to make the case that we're not opening up trade offices, but you bet we're going to be involved in trade missions. We're going to tell our story around the world and hopefully open up markets, especially in markets where the nation-to-nation or the government-to-government relationship is important, as it is in much of Asia.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To first comment on the previous comments the Premier made about the earlier question, the Chair of the province-wide board, the individual in question that the minister appointed, Mr. Speaker, in that role on the provincial Chair made six decisions: two in favour of the client, four in favour of the ministry. But before as a regional Chair, there is a different record where she made 223 decisions, 17 in favour of the client.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, on at least, Mr. Chair, at least on one occasion that the taxpayers footed a bill for the Chair to speak with the minister. And we look forward to that information being obtained from the ministry and being provided here in the Assembly before this committee, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier talked about the need for travel, and travel that has occurred by the Premier and other ministers. And, Mr. Speaker, this isn't about the need for the Premier of the province and senior ministers to travel. Of course they should be travelling. Of course they should be representing Saskatchewan and promoting our interests in different spots. I have no objection with that, and I would expect and want the Premier to be doing that. That's only reasonable and a smart thing to do.

The question was, the Premier said they reviewed all of the expenses. And out of the expenses, all they found were the two incidents that we've discussed in question period, of the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Social Services having improper expense claims. And the Premier said, we reviewed it and everything is good to go. My question is, who did that review?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We wanted to come quickly with the new process for disclosure, so there was work conducted for the weekend, through the weekend by a number of officials.

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

Mr. Broten: — And in reviewing that information, Mr. Chair, is that how the Premier came to the conclusion that out of all of the travel the ministers have done and the Premier has done since '07, that only the incident of the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Social Services were the only two improper expense claims?

[15:30]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, as far as I'm aware, the records of the government travel we looked at, I asked officials to bring forward any concerns they would have about others. They did that, Mr. Chairman. We did not . . . They did provide a report. There wasn't any other concerns that stood out in terms of things that we would want to address. But we did actually go further than our government as well. There were a few other things that did stand out.

Because we wanted to find out, well if we were changing the disclosure process of travel, we wanted to find out, well, what did the NDP do in office? Did they, how did they disclose it? What was included in their reports to the taxpayers? Maybe we could learn something from what the NDP did. And so we did find a few other things, Mr. Chair. We found a limousine service, and this was actually a limo for an airport ride from Vancouver to the port facility in Vancouver for \$181 signed by the minister. I mean, I think we were having a good debate in the House about when a taxicab might suffice. This is probably an occasion where that would have been the case, but there was a limo service booked for the minister of the time, Mr. Lautermilch.

We were also able to determine — and not with a lot of detail because what we did learn about the NDP years is that most of the receipts were discarded, or at least we didn't have access to them; not a lot of information there — but we were able to find, for example other reports of the minister of the time, Maynard

Sonntag. He was the minister of Crown Investments Corporation for the NDP, where the minister attended meetings along with Mr. Hart, Frank Hart who was the head of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], regarding the investigation they were making of public-private partnerships in Australia and New Zealand for about 53 — what's the total? — \$53,000.

They went and they met with EnergyAustralia and Infrastructure Auckland, obviously in New Zealand, in addition to other government agencies and private sector companies. They said the reason for the trip was to gather information around how P3s [public-private partnership] work and how they are implemented in areas such as fire suppression and highway funding. Interesting. Basically the privatization of highway funding is what they were looking at.

By the way, I want to say very genuinely to the Leader of the Opposition, thank you for your support, thank him for his support of the Regina bypass P3 initiative because we are going to have a private contractor involved in that.

And it was interesting, I followed the debate between the member for Lakeview and the Minister of Corrections today earlier when we had union members from the corrections facility on the food services piece. I think it's fair to say that with the NDP position in support of the private involvement of highway construction in the Regina bypass announcement, because I think they thought it made pragmatic sense, that I hope that they would advise the government to review the RFP with respect to corrections in the same vein, to see if it makes sense.

So, Mr. Chairman, the bottom line is this: we know we will have a new disclosure process now that will be better for the government, better than what we used for six years. Should have done this earlier? Absolutely, but we were also watching our expenditures, Mr. Chairman. This has always been the priority of the Government of Saskatchewan since 2007, that we would, Mr. Chairman, treat the taxpayers' dollars very, very carefully. And that's why the number of out-of-province trips is down 31 per cent in terms of our term in government; cost of out-of-province travel down 21 per cent; in- and out-of-province costs down 46 per cent; executive air costs down 63 per cent, all the while where we were engaged in the international travel that I've referenced for the obvious reasons.

So we take this seriously. We watch this money very, very carefully. And when there was a mistake made, when an official booked a service that was arguably not needed, first the ministers involved voluntarily agreed to offer the money back when they realized what had happened. And it was brought to the attention of the House, of the members of this committee by the members opposite — a credit to them. And then the individual that had booked it without the minister's knowledge stepped forward to pay it as well. So you know, that's obviously a step in the right direction. What has come from that is a new disclosure process, and we're happy to be moving forward with that increased transparency.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well it was an interesting filibuster from the

Premier in his own estimates, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier wants to go back on to travel to '91, okay. If he wants to go back to 1982, okay. He can do these deflection issues, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the questions at hand about the travel that has supposedly been reviewed by this government.

The Premier said that staff officials reviewed the travel from the last number of years and that two incidents were identified, and there were no other incidents. I assume the officials that were working over the weekend, as the Premier referenced, were not down in the basement going through shoeboxes of receipts. I assume there was some sort of format that this information was provided in. My question to the Premier: what format were they reviewing that information in?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, some of the work was to go through receipts: some in files, some of the work involved digital records if they were current enough, but usually receipts are in paper form. And so this work was done. We tried to find all of the information we could to answer questions in this House, as we should, and also to inform a new process for reporting.

Mr. Chairman, though I'm a little disappointed that the member would completely discount the past in all of this because, what he said, what he personally said in his questions of the minister in question period — the Minister of Social Services — went right to her family. It was quite personal about whether it was appropriate to take family members on what he characterized as a personal trip. Well that matters, Mr. Chairman.

It matters then if he would apply that same standard to himself, for example on a CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] trip to Louisville. If the issue of family members travelling was an issue for the Minister of Social Services, is it an issue for all of us? Is it an issue for the member that asked the question? Is it an issue for his current Justice critic who, while he was a minister of the Crown, would regularly attend something called the western attorneys general conference. But the western attorneys general conference I'm talking about was not the Western Canadian attorneys general conference. It was an American western attorneys general conference.

Mr. Chairman, for these trips — and I don't know if I particularly have a problem with this. I don't. I don't — the minister at the time, the current member for Lakeview, took his family. And they went to places like Sun Valley, Idaho, and Monterey, California. They went to Sylvan Lake resort in Custer in South Dakota. Here's the thing: he wasn't even the attorney general for some of these trips. He was the Minister of Health, but he was going to an attorney general meeting, and there was the family with him. And the amount of the trips, these three trips, cost about \$12,000.

Now there was also a family component there. So all I'm . . . I'm not sure, I don't think that's a problem. In this political life, I think if it's within the rules — and these were; and so is what the minister did; so is what, I think, the hon. member did with respect to CPA — I don't think it's a problem. But the point is this: if the Leader of the Opposition is going to raise the questions about family in an accusatory tone of any member on

this side, then he has to also ask himself how one standard can apply to members here and another standard for members opposite.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister, when we talked about the trip to Ghana, has yet to explain how that trip provided a benefit to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, has yet to explain that in any way, shape, or form. And, Mr. Chair, as all members, we can have a discussion about the merits of CPA trips and all of those things, Mr. Speaker.

The issue here, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about the expenses, the Premier said it was reviewed. The Premier said, Mr. Speaker, they determined that there are only two instances. The Premier said that the information that they have available . . . is it some in electronic format, maybe some on paper spreadsheets? I don't know, Mr. Speaker. But when this government provided the information for the expenses for the last year, Mr. Speaker, they left out, they left out the staff expenses. So presumably if it's on a spreadsheet, if it's in electronic form, Mr. Speaker, that information could be provided. My question to the Premier: will he table that information today?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we're coming to a new process so we can report in specificity. And I want to just make this point to the hon. member: there were not staff costs included in the current disclosure process. And that's a mistake and it's going to be fixed. And it is exactly the same process that existed for years under the NDP.

When we say we're spending less in travel than the members opposite, we're comparing apples to apples because neither did they include staff costs. This is wrong, by the way. We need to address it, six years perhaps too late, and we're going to do that. We're going to have a new disclosure process that addresses it.

Then the member stands up and says, Mr. Speaker, as a declarative that the minister brought nothing back from the trip. He's going to find out on Monday in fact that he's wrong. Never mind the FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder] exchange that occurs at the conference, but as a result of a stop in the United Kingdom, Saskatchewan is going to have one of the most innovative tools in terms of social development, social impact, the only province that will have this tool. And it is a direct result of the minister's trip, a direct result.

I know the member's been on a CPA trip. Maybe there was family members with him. What did he bring back from that trip for the province of Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier has admitted that the information related to travel expenses, including the expenses of staff, Mr. Speaker, are in a format which is digestible, on spreadsheets, in paper. My question to the Premier: why won't he table the information related to staff travel costs over the past year, as they have put forward the information for ministerial

travel?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, is that the information with staff costs included is not how we've compiled information to date. It's not how the NDP did it. That's why we're changing the format. So for him to say it's digestible, whatever that means, is not quite accurate, if I think I understand what he's saying.

But the member wants to skip through these issues now. The member wants to not answer. Yes, I think it's a chance for him to respond at least because he spent quite a few questions in question period on the attack of the Minister of Social Services. He just did it here today. What did she bring back from her trip? Well we're going to be able to . . . She's already made her case as to what she brought back. It'll be made further on Monday.

The Leader of the Opposition cannot have a double standard. What did he bring back from his CPA trip that he attended, and I think with a family member? What did the member for Regina Lakeview bring back from attending four conferences in a row all over the United States of the Western American attorneys general where his family came with him, in his capacity as the Health minister? It's a fair debate. If the member wants to have this discussion, he better be fulsome in his answers or people will conclude that there might be a double standard over there. And I don't think that's anything a new leader of a political party needs.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, every member of this Assembly, government side or opposition side, when they go on a CPA trip they provide a report to all members of the Assembly of what was done and what was learned, Mr. Speaker.

My question, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said that they reviewed the expenses for travel, staff expenses and ministerial expenses, Mr. Speaker. But my question then: if the information is not together in a digestible way when it comes to staff expenses, how could the Premier determine that all expenses were appropriate?

[15:45]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. When we announced the new disclosure process, which will be a great improvement over what we have done and what the NDP did when they were in office, we said pretty clearly right then that the current reporting process had been exactly the same as what was under the previous government, but doesn't simply automatically allow for the pulling together of all of the information, which is still available.

We get asked by the media about costs for trade missions when they're completed, and we'll certainly provide that. We know the global numbers for our government's travel are under what was spent by the NDP, even unadjusted for inflation. We can provide those overall numbers, Mr. Speaker. On a case-by-case

basis, we'll work to provide all the detail we can to members opposite because, Mr. Speaker, the numbers are down, and the numbers are down significantly over what members were doing when they were in government.

I would say though that going forward we're going to have a disclosure process. We're developing it now so that all of the information is available in terms of all of the attendant costs of a trip. The breakdowns are available, reported twice a year. And it'll certainly be an improvement over what we've been doing so far and what the New Democrats did when they were in office.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to have the travel expenses for staff, as we've seen from the two incidents that the Premier identifies of the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Social Services. In those instances, Mr. Speaker, many of the expenses were billed by the cabinet secretary, the staff along. In the instance of the Deputy Premier, it was the ADM [assistant deputy minister] where many of the expenses showed up, Mr. Speaker.

So if the Premier has determined that the expenses are above board, that everything is fine, that these were the only two examples, it's important to have the figures for staff in addition to the ministers themselves. So it would be good for that information to be provided.

Earlier on in the spring sitting, the Premier put the cabinet secretary and clerk of Executive Council on probation. That's a very significant step, Mr. Speaker, because this individual has been the Premier's right-hand adviser for a very long time. So my question to the Premier, Mr. Chair: what does this probation entail?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, the matter was very serious because the booking of the particular service did not come to the attention of the ministers involved, and they were rightfully concerned about it. And so I took the action of placing the cabinet secretary on probation. It meant a travel restriction. And I know that, whether or not as a direct result of probation or not, the individual in question came forward and decided, notwithstanding the fact that ministers were prepared to pay back the amount of the car service, he chose to do that.

I wouldn't say that's a direct function of probation, but I think there was certainly an impact there, and those would be the particular terms of the probation.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, to the Premier for some of the detail around what the probation entails. I'm curious, Mr. Speaker: what is the entire rationale for the decision to put this very senior political appointee on probation? What is the entire rationale? What was discussed with the individual? Was it simply the travel incident that we know of in the Assembly or were there other instances where there was inappropriate spending?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It was the issue in question.

The Chair: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We put forward a freedom of information request for all the expenses of this very senior political appointee. The government is stalling on that release of information. They've extended the FOI by 30 days. My question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier: will the Premier agree to table the expense claims of the cabinet secretary and clerk of Executive Council today?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I am informed that the officer, the independent officer who handles FOIs, has received an extraordinary number of requests. The information will be provided. The FOI will be responded to. There is the provision, with respect to FOIs, for an extension. And in the case where the officer is extremely busy, it's invoked, and that's the case here.

The Chair: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well there's an amount of time left on the clock. There are a number of officials, Mr. Speaker, who are in this room, officials who are watching in the building and throughout the capital, Mr. Speaker, watching these proceedings. So I would hope that in the time that we have available, that the information with the cabinet secretary's expenses would be brought into the Chamber and the Premier would be able to table that information.

Because the Premier says that, oh it's just these two incidents and we know the cabinet secretary's been put on probation. There's no problem here. Everything is fine. But I think Saskatchewan people should see the invoices. I think Saskatchewan people should have the information available to them. And I would encourage the Premier in the time that we have here this afternoon to get that information and to provide it to the people of the province.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said that his right-hand adviser is serving as Saskatchewan's representative to Buckingham Palace. Could the Premier please explain what exactly that means?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The cabinet secretary has been involved in terms of the government's coordination of its relationship with Buckingham Palace with respect to the royal visits, with respect to the Prince's charities, Mr. Chairman. We've also asked him, and he's done an excellent job of coordinating and liaising with the various Ukrainian associations both here in the province and the national ones, and of course there's been a much greater import lent to these particular relations here of late. But these date back even to the province being the first one to recognize Holodomor with the private member's bill, with the work I should say

rather led by the Deputy Premier.

And so from time to time we ask officials where they have capacity and connections to take on other duties, and he's done these duties and done them quite well. In fact I know that with respect to this particular individual, there have been a number of meetings with respect to the superintendent of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. There's been help to coordinate what we might do in Charlottetown this summer as the province of Prince Edward Island seeks to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference. There is a relationship to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the triannual conference, in terms of our province's representation at some of these things. So we do want to be involved in them and because of a network there that was readily available to the government, the individual in question undertook these duties.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it relates to the FOIs going to Executive Council, Mr. Speaker, I'm told that we only have three FOIs in for Executive Council, so it's hardly swamping Executive Council with respect to providing information that is appropriate.

This representative to Buckingham Palace, Mr. Speaker, is this a new position? And does being on probation affect any of the duties that would be expected from our go-between to Buckingham Palace?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, if there are any particular work that we need to do with the Prince's charities, I think we would still call upon this individual as long as it didn't involve any travel.

And I want to point out for members of the committee that it would not just be the official opposition that would submit FOIs to the Government of Saskatchewan. They come from other groups as well.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question to the Premier: is he absolutely certain that there are no additional inappropriate expense claims by the cabinet secretary?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I'm advised, Mr. Chairman, that to the knowledge of senior officials and to my knowledge, there was nothing counter to policy or regulations in the government.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now the coordination between those that are in this room and those that are in the building who would have access to the expense claims, has a message been sent to those individuals to bring the information to the Assembly for it to be tabled?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — No.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just touching again on something we discussed earlier with respect to the expense claims put forward by the Co-Chair of the tribunal appeal board, the good friend of the minister who was appointed by the minister, is that information being gathered now so it can be provided to this committee?

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

Mr. Broten: — Earlier on in committee, it was asked for the expense claims that the Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board has made. I have asked for that information to be provided to the Assembly because we're aware of at least one instance where the Co-Chair billed for discussions with the minister.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, we'll table . . . We'll provide that information to members of the committee.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. Back to the Provincial Secretary or pardon me, the cabinet secretary, not the Provincial Secretary. In other provinces, Mr. Speaker, where there's an Usher of the Black Rod — and there aren't many because it's actually quite rare — in those provinces, the Usher of the Black Rod tends to be a ceremonial position that isn't partisan, Mr. Speaker, and often the Sergeant-at-Arms is the individual that serves in that role. But here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have the Premier's right-hand adviser, a political appointee, serving in that role as the Usher of the Black Rod. Could the Premier please explain how that decision was made that this individual should serve in that role?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, this was an idea, an innovation of the individual in question and he spearheaded it, including raising thousands of private sector dollars to help pay for it, coordinating with the Buckingham Palace and the Prince on his visit. It's a duty for which he receives no remuneration. It's a volunteer position, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Broten: — So did the cabinet secretary just come to the Premier and say, you know what would be great? I'd love to be the Usher of the Black Rod. You think you could make that happen? Is that the conversation that happened between the cabinet secretary and the Premier? And my question, being on probation, does that affect any of the duties that the Usher of the Black Rod may have?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, just because of an interest in the innovation here pioneered by the individual, he as I recall

actually submitted a number of names. And I asked him to perform these volunteer duties, and he accepted.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through the discussions we've on a number of topics, we've discussed the role of FOIs, freedom of information requests, Mr. Speaker. A lot of the concerning details that have been revealed about this government's actions as it relates to travel, as it relates to decisions, have been obtained through the FOI process. And that's a good thing, Mr. Speaker, I believe for democracy, that that information can indeed be obtained. But we've actually found, Mr. Speaker, the FOI process to be quite frustrating. There are long delays. The law is not always followed. Fees are excessive and the public, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is not always served well as a result of that.

[16:00]

For example, the FOI for the Minister of Economy's travel expenses took five months when in fact it was supposed to take 60 days. The FOI for the VFA report in the Ministry of Health is still outstanding, and that's now six months old. The government actually wanted to charge us, Mr. Speaker, over \$16,000 for the FOI documents around contracts in Central Services. So it's obviously cost prohibitive, and the people in Saskatchewan won't have access to that information.

Mr. Speaker, I understand in other jurisdictions, other provinces, there are better FOI processes. And I have no idea, Mr. Speaker, if the FOI process has gotten worse under government or if this is par for the course, but I do think, Mr. Speaker, it's an area where things could be improved, things could be changed in order to have the most open and transparent government possible. So I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier would be willing to look at the FOI process, working with the opposition in a way, in order to ensure that the FOI process that is in place is in fact serving the interests of democracy here in Saskatchewan.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thanks, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member for the question. And I hope that in their internal discussions he's perhaps asked the travelling Health minister to attorneys general conference in America about what he thinks about FOI processes, because we're using the same FOI process we inherited from the NDP. And by the way, here's the good news: it's a good process.

In 2012-13 government institutions processed, using that same FOI process, we processed 2,483 requests. That's well above the average of 683 since the Act came into force. So consider this, members of the committee, now. Consider this, Mr. Chair: 2,483 requests in '12-13 — that's the year we have complete numbers for, I would expect — well above the average of 683 when the Act came into force. Where records existed, access was granted 98 per cent of the time and 98 per cent of the responses were within 60 days.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, to my honourable friend, the 2012 *National Freedom of Information Audit* ranked

Saskatchewan among the best in the country for both extent and speed of disclosure, better than British Columbia, better than Alberta, better than NDP Manitoba, better than Ontario. So I think the system is working well. Would we rule out changes, any improvements? No, I don't think we would rule them out. Mr. Chairman, I also advise that officials within Executive Council are looking at the FOI process. There is a review under way to try to improve on what is already one of the best records in Canada.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Chair, there are indeed merits to the process we have, but based on our experience and the experience I hear from other people in the province, the process could be improved. The process could be strengthened. And hearing a degree of openness from the Premier on this issue I think would be worthy of discussions between the two sides of the House.

Moving on to another topic, Mr. Speaker, and that of temporary foreign workers, something that's been in the larger media to a great degree and a discussion here in the Assembly as well. We note the government employs quite a few temporary foreign workers. We note the government has even employed a temporary foreign worker to work as a cashier at a liquor board store. So some questions on temporary foreign workers, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier provide information on how many temporary foreign workers are currently working for the provincial government? Where are they working, and why weren't Saskatchewan residents hired?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, once again, just to the last set of questions. I should also point out when the same survey with respect to the efficiency of the government's FOI, of the current government's FOI process, when the same survey was done of the previous NDP government in 2005 — a significantly different result than 2012, the recent one where we finished on the top of the list in terms of disclosure — in 2005 Saskatchewan placed dead last, dead last under the NDP, dead last and was awarded an F grade by the same survey.

So, Mr. Chairman, we had some improvements to make, and we won't rule out . . . And by the way, the member said, well sometimes we have to pay. I can tell my honourable friend that as leader of the opposition, we routinely faced huge bills asked of us by the government opposite to prepare information. And in many cases, the bills were warranted because of the amount of resources required.

So we've made a great improvement on FOI disclosure from the days of your party, of the party opposite, Mr. Chairman. We can always do better. And that's why the review is under way by the Executive Council members.

With respect to temporary foreign workers, I have requested my deputy minister to do an update, a review of where we were at with respect to this issue, because I want to be aware of any temporary foreign workers that have been employed by the government, especially in the wake of recent developments. It's obviously an important question at any time. And I'm told by

senior officials that by early next week, we'll have the current number, if there are any to report, and the circumstances around them.

Because what we've said, Mr. Chairman, is this: we need to ensure that with respect to the temporary foreign worker program, that Canadians are getting the first access to jobs. And only then should there be a labour market opinion sought; only then should the TFW [temporary foreign worker] initiative even be contemplated.

But we know in our province, Mr. Chair, that last year, when you include students, 55 per cent, 55 per cent temporary foreign workers made their way to permanent residence. And I'm not sure again of the number specifically; we've asked for that update and should have it very soon. We'll provide it to all members of the committee.

The Chair: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Well certainly, Mr. Chair, on record in the briefing binders they must have some sort of tally for how many temporary foreign workers are employed by the province in what positions, Mr. Speaker, and why, an explanation as to why Canadians weren't hired for those positions. So my question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier: would he table the most up-to-date information that is available right now in committee, please?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As a result of my request to the Deputy, he has been working with the other permanent heads of government and the Crowns to get an exacting number in this. And I'm conferring with him now, and he's not optimistic about by the end of business today or the conclusion of estimates, but we're going to certainly make that effort and speed up the reporting process across government. But it has been initiated here very recently, Mr. Chairman.

We know that, with respect to the provincial situation, there is roughly 11,700 temporary foreign workers working in the province. That was as of December 2013. They account for about 2.1 per cent of the employment here in the province of Saskatchewan. And with respect again to the path of permanency, that's what we want from all newcomers into the province. We want them to be residents and citizens and eventually taxpayers.

And the good news is that when you include students, we're getting up to 55 per cent in the last reporting year of those who have been temporary foreign workers and moved to permanent residency. That's up from about 50 per cent the year before. I think it was 44 per cent the year before that, and about 40 per cent in the year prior. So we're heading in the right direction.

Our number one priority as a province, and it would be as a government, is to hire Saskatchewan people. And within that cohort, our number one priority would be to hire First Nations people right across Saskatchewan. That would be true for our economy because we seek greater engagement there where we have an unemployment gap. But there is a role for temporary foreign workers where we cannot find people to fill the position

for whatever reason. And we'll have the information to members of the committee shortly.

The Chair: — I recognize the opposition leader.

Mr. Broten: — How frequent is this information updated? Is this the type of thing that would be updated every few months, or is it a stand-alone project where the government seeks to find the information and put it in one spot? I know there's been information released from government in the past that lists the different ministries and agencies where temporary foreign workers exist, so I would assume that there is some sort of tally somewhere within the binders across the floor, Mr. Speaker. Is there a previous list that the Premier can table today? And then we can see the updated list if in fact it's coming to us shortly.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The reporting process previously would've been something that approximated an annual process. I have asked officials that the frequency of that report be increased to every six months. We would like to know the status of the government's, any temporary foreign workers the Government of Saskatchewan will be employing.

There might be occasions, for example, on the engineering side, perhaps on the research side, where students . . . And let's not forget that there's a great complement of students who qualify under this general category of temporary foreign workers, especially on the research side and the post-graduate side. So these would be potentially the kinds of rare instances of TFWs employed in the government, I would expect. But we'll get the report, and then the report would be made more frequent because obviously all of us, in government and people across the province, have an even greater interest in the issue even then before.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's odd that's there no information available to be tabled at this time. Just to clarify, I understand it's being gathered. It's being worked on. What is the commitment from the Premier as to when that information will be made available to members?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — As soon as I have it, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've asked a number of questions about the economic impact of the grain transportation crisis in Finance estimates on April 8th, Mr. Speaker, and in Economy estimates on April 14th, but we didn't get a proper answer in either of those committees. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance pointed us to the Minister of the Economy for an answer and the Minister of the Economy pointed us to the Minister of Finance for an answer.

The Minister of the Economy provided an estimated impact of between 1 billion and 7 billion. He went on to say, "But I think unquestionably it has the potential to have an impact now on

going forward. I think that there's some work being done by the Ministry of Finance around this area to try and establish what that impact might be." And that's from April 14th. So quite a range, Mr. Speaker, identified from the 1 billion to 7 billion. But on April 8th, Mr. Speaker, just a week prior, the Finance minister actually said, "... what analysis are we doing in Finance? — the answer is none in terms of actually monitoring that."

So perhaps, Mr. Chair, the Premier will have an answer on this. Which ministry in government is actually undertaking economic analysis about the impact of the grain transportation crisis?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the deputy minister to Executive Council who has just exited the Chamber, the committee meeting, to get a quick update on the current survey of the temporary foreign worker issue, and it's been reported back through the deputy minister from Crown Investments Corporation that they are unable to find any temporary foreign workers in the Crown sector right now that they're aware of with the process under way. We should have the numbers across the line departments of government by the end of business today, and we'll share that number, if there are any, with all members of the committee.

The fact of the matter is we have Economy, Agriculture, and Highways and Transportation that have been looking at this issue in a general sense that I would argue have been very effective in making this more of a national issue than it was before they got involved, before the province of Saskatchewan got involved. They've also been looking at the economic impact issue, but it's very hard to be able to discern that impact and report to members of the committee either in the estimates previous or now because it's simply almost impossible to track in individual sales that have occurred, even in the last couple of weeks or the last couple of months or, you know, dating right back to the time where the challenge became most acute with respect to the grain transportation backlog.

We have estimates that in terms of direct impact to the economy, we're looking at about \$880 million, but indirect impact would be, well it would be well over \$1 billion obviously because of the importance of the industry. We also know that the backlog has hurt on the potash side. We know that there have been challenges in terms of other commodities. Now in the spring we face, you know, some anecdotal stories already about inputs and access to fertilizer exacerbated by the same challenge with the rail companies.

[16:15]

I do welcome this question, though, Mr. Chair, because this — I think everybody was in agreement — this was the number one economic issue facing the province of Saskatchewan. And I believe this is the first time in this House the member has took to his feet to ask a question of the government, the first time.

I remember meeting with the Minister of Agriculture federally when we were talking about this issue, when we were asking for inclusion in the Act, the federal Acts, and very specific

requests. And I asked him at that time — and maybe it's changed since — but that would have been, oh just before Easter I guess, or during the federal Easter break. I'm looking at the Minister of Agriculture. I think that's about when it was. And we asked the minister's office, did you hear, have you heard word one from my counterpart, from the leader of the NDP?

Because they have sent letters to the Prime Minister and federal ministers on other issues, to their credit. I think with respect to fire suppression on First Nations reserves, the member was engaged, to his credit, sent a letter to either the federal minister or maybe the Prime Minister — I'm not sure — to the credit of the Leader of the Opposition.

But on this issue up until that point, not a word. Some work in the House by the critic, some good work I would say, questions asked of the minister and exchanges. But in the province of Saskatchewan where we have 44 per cent of the arable acres in Canada, where agriculture, especially now in its renaissance, is a driver of economic wealth and jobs and where the transportation backlog risked our economy, and there's a great risk still to it today, I was surprised, and I remain surprised, that the first time the Leader of the Opposition has asked a question about it, has spoken publicly about it to me anyway in this context of the House was just now, Mr. Chairman.

I welcome the question. This is the economic impact we can estimate, but again it's very difficult to bell that cat just because of the movement of grain, the sales that have even occurred, Mr. Chairman, from last week.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier should review the *Hansard* record. He and I both participated in a debate on this very issue on the floor of the Assembly. We've been raising this, Mr. Speaker, through our critic, through debates that we've had here in the Assembly, through statements in the public, Mr. Speaker, well in advance, well in advance of this government demonstrating interest and concern about the topic.

It was back in March, Mr. Speaker, of 2013, not 2014, that we asked questions in the House on the federal rail freight service bill, questions here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And it's interesting the indifference we actually saw from government members with their relationship, with their concern on this important topic, and their relationship with the feds. It was Bruce Johnstone that wrote on February 7th, 2014:

What does it take to get Premier Brad Wall exercised about the fact that much of Saskatchewan's record harvest is sitting in grain elevators or farmers' fields, thanks to a grain transportation system that's failed to deliver the goods and a do nothing federal government content to sit on its hands? Apparently, the threat of strike action.

Until this week, Wall has barely said a word about the massive backlog of grain that's costing farmers potentially billions of dollars in foregone income.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's rhetoric on this — and he's fond of the word torquing — is a prime example here of what the

Premier is doing.

So we look at the huge impact that this will have on the province of Saskatchewan. It's important to ensure that the right ministries are tracking this and are taking the consequences of the crisis into consideration when making decisions around our finances. So my question is, how is the grain transportation crisis factored in the current budget forecast?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I want to point out for members of the committee that when we came back from our trip in the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations], in Southeast Asia, one of my first stops was to meet with the Prime Minister, where long before we were hearing any concerns about the backlog, I was raising the concerns that we were hearing from our customer countries in the Philippines in the ASEAN region where we met with millers. And millers would say, you know, we don't even call Canada in December and January because there's not the reliability of delivery. And so this, by the way, predates the change at the Wheat Board. This was just a challenge that Canada was having in that particular market, and a lot of it was related to logistics.

And on my return, I raised these concerns with the Prime Minister, concerns in general about a number of issues with respect to grain transportation. And subsequent to that of course we've had a very active Minister of Agriculture on this particular file, I think most would agree.

And I've talked to a lot of farmers who have asked me to thank the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of the Economy and the Minister of Highways because those farmers believe that Saskatchewan was leading on the issue, that Saskatchewan was able to make this more of a national media issue. I had media tell me that when we were in Ottawa for another speaking engagement and I met with those officials. And so we should. Because we are home to most of the arable acres of the country, at least just less than half of those arable acres. And our exports have gone up 70 per cent since 2007, Mr. Chairman, not just in agriculture — that's the overall number — but driven in many respects in those years by agriculture.

With respect to the question on the forecasts, I can tell the members opposite that the GDP [gross domestic product] forecasts for the province remain unchanged, notwithstanding the grain situation. They were at about 2.4 per cent forecast in our budget documents, and I think it's safe to say that they've been validated today by at least one additional, one external source. The Bank of Montreal reported out today, and I'm pleased to inform members of the committee that they're calling for strong, steady growth for the province of Saskatchewan, GDP this year of about 2.4 per cent. So they're validating, they're corroborating the number in the budget. By the way, the reason they say that we have the prospects of solid growth in the province is because of the good financial management in Saskatchewan. I'd expect that would reflect the fact that the budget is balanced and that we've reduced the general operating debt of this province by over \$2 billion. But they also point to a diversified economy.

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Chairman, and I'm glad we're

talking about the economy. I've been noting in the recent job numbers — and I know the member will welcome this fact — in the recent job numbers we've seen an actual decrease in natural-resource-related jobs but an increase in the overall employment in the province, an increase in the overall number of jobs. And the reason, when you break down the numbers in a number of the reports, is that we've increased jobs in innovation. Sounds like smart growth. We've increased the number of jobs in the trade sector and in manufacturing.

And so, not the government, but what this economy is doing, what the people are doing, they're diversifying the economy. We need to do more of that but . . . And the member for Dewdney points out that sounds like more eggs in more baskets. I think he's probably right about that. But as far as we know, and we're watching this carefully, we're not yet adjusting the GDP forecast for the province with respect to the budget, and that seems to be borne out by what BMO [Bank of Montreal] reported even this morning.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Premier says he's been busy on this file, but it's puzzling then why a columnist as recently as February 7th, 2014 would say, "Until this week, Wall has barely said a word about the massive backlog of grain that's costing farmers potentially billions of dollars in foregone income."

Mr. Speaker, the question of the financial impact that the grain transportation crisis will have for the province is a very important one. That's why the questions were asked in earlier committee sittings, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Finance as well the Minister of Economy. And the range given on the impact was quite significant or quite broad, I should say — from 1 billion to \$7 billion, something like that, Mr. Speaker.

So just to clarify from the Premier, Mr. Speaker: is it his belief that the government has appropriately and accurately evaluated the threat that the grain transportation crisis poses to our economy, and have the adjustments been made within the budget to properly reflect their estimation of what the impact will be?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I was wrong. BMO reported our GDP forecast to be 2.4 per cent. The budget document actually says 2.2 per cent. So the first independent economist report on our economy, the basis for which we would plan our finances, the first independent since the budget was tabled is actually higher than ours. So we're watching it carefully because it's an important issue.

But you know, Mr. Chairman, it's interesting. This member, this Leader of the Opposition, I followed the leadership campaign, and it wasn't just because I didn't have . . . You know, I'm interested in politics. So I've followed the campaign platforms of all of the NDP leadership candidates, including my hon. friend. And I thought except for perhaps the deputy, the current deputy leader, he was talking at least a lot about rural Saskatchewan. I give him credit for that.

But, Mr. Chairman, I think the first test of his leadership on the issue of agriculture, on the issue of rural Saskatchewan, was this last spring in this very room. One of the best platforms — and I've had that job before — one of the best platforms an opposition leader will have to draw attention to an issue, to advocate for something important in the province of Saskatchewan, is question period.

And the member has done a good job on health issues. I think he's raised a number of health issues and done so effectively. And there's been an exchange sometimes with me, sometimes with the Minister of Health. But not once, not once in question period since, I don't know — when did we start here, the first week in March? — has the member stood up and asked a single, solitary question on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers. Not one.

So I, with great respect, I'm not sure there would be a lot of credibility in him lecturing anybody in this House. His Ag critic, for example, who has been on the file or this Agriculture minister or this Minister of the Economy or that Minister of Highways, I don't think anyone's probably going to take their cues, with respect.

And the bottom line is we have work to lead on the issue because it is important. We want to let our partners and stakeholders in rural Saskatchewan know that it's important and doing so means working at it. Doing so maybe means taking the time as even a Leader of the Opposition to write a letter to the Prime Minister — he's happy to do it on other issues — to write a letter to the Minister of Agriculture who's from Saskatchewan and say, here's the concerns of the NDP on behalf of farmers. Maybe, Mr. Chairman, it might be an indication that he cared about rural Saskatchewan.

And if he has, I hope he tables it. If he would write a letter to his own federal leader. We were calling for federal legislation. So did he ever pick up the phone and call Mr. Mulcair? Or did he write a letter to Mr. Mulcair and say, we have an issue in Saskatchewan that we need you to co-operate with the federal government to get legislation passed, a short-term order in council or the long-term legislation?

I think that would be the kind of effort that producers would be looking for. I hope they would say, I hope they would say that that is the effort they've gotten from members on the government side.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our record is very clear on the times we have raised this in question period, the times we have commented in public, the times we've debated in this Assembly. And the Premier might not like what independent and non-partisan analysts say, Mr. Speaker, but when they write on February 7th, 2014, "Until this week, Wall has barely said a word about the massive backlog of grain that's costing farmers potentially billions of dollars in foregone income," well, Mr. Chair, it's probably fair to say that the Premier and I aren't going to agree on the issue of who's taking this issue seriously and who's commenting on it.

But thankfully on other issues, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to agriculture, we've actually seen this government do some

flip-flops. First off, when we talked about joint running rights, at that time the minister said, well we're not even sure if there really are answers; it's really complicated. Well lo and behold, a bit of time passed and then they think joint running rights might in fact be part of the solution. On penalties for railways, Mr. Chair, initially they were happy with the \$100,000 a day, but then, Mr. Speaker, they understood that, well actually that is a drop in the bucket with respect to what's actually needed, and then finally called for \$250,000 a day. On provincial lease payments, Mr. Chair, they initially sent threatening letters to farmers about paying up, but then they gave them a breather until July. So we have seen instances where they've flip-flopped, and it's actually been for the better of producers here in Saskatchewan.

But one area where they've been stubbornly dismissive, Mr. Speaker, where they have not been listening, is in the area of community pastures. And we'd love to see them flip-flop on this agricultural issue. So my question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier: why won't the government change its mind on community pastures?

[16:30]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thanks, Mr. Chairman. Again this has become a regular habit. We have to check, correct the record as has been presented by my hon. friend because he's wrong and he's mischaracterized the government's position. Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Agriculture did not change his position on joint running rights. What we did say as a province was a need for the extension of interswitching, Mr. Chairman. These things are different because of course joint running rights would involve the entire track, the entire rail. We were talking about what might be more feasible, which actually manifests itself in the federal legislation, I want to point out, and something we raised directly with the minister.

And by the way, Mr. Chairman, we often phone the minister directly. We raise things with him directly, and we don't always check with the analysts that the hon. member has referenced before we do that. Moreover the member said, well we called for or we said \$100,000 a day was fine. But the minister said, when the federal government acted in an unprecedented way, and I think to a great degree at the urging of the province of Saskatchewan — others as well but I think it's fair to say that the efforts of the Government of Saskatchewan helped get the reaction from the federal government — the minister said it was a good start. And I lauded it as well.

Members opposite panned it. Members opposite said, you know, basically rejected it out of hand. And were they the government, I wonder if they would have ever been listened to by the federal minister after that reaction when he went to develop the long-term legislation when the federal House came back. Here's the fact of the matter is we asked for a \$250,000-per-day penalty for the railway companies.

So again we have to watch this member. We have to check his preamble facts because more often than not we're correcting the record. Sometimes it's on an innocent thing like trees. Sometimes it's on a less innocent thing like mischaracterizing

the position of the Minister of Agriculture on the file. But we'll do that. We're here to serve all the members of the legislature, including his members so that they know what actually has been said.

With respect to the pastures, you know, Mr. Chairman, I wonder what the position of the NDP is. We want to hear directly from members opposite if it's their position that the government should simply basically be taking over all of the responsibilities here. We've taken a different approach. The federal government has decided to make this change whether or not the province of Saskatchewan or any other province supported it. The request has been, take them over.

What we'd have said is, we'd like to turn this over to patrons. We would like to have the patrons take control over these pastures. And the minister informs me that now 10 contracts, 10 different contracts have been signed with patrons so that we can devolve. We can see the service, if you will, the capacity of the pastures continue but not necessarily take them over as a government, add it to government. Rather we'd rather have the patrons own them, and we're making progress on that, and that remains the position of the Government of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. This government's been very selective with respect to who they've been listening to with respect to community pastures and ensuring that the expertise that has developed through community pastures, the services that are provided to a great number of patrons in the province, that that is in fact maintained and is there for the long haul based on the position that the federal government has taken and put many patrons in a bad place or situation, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to talk on another topic, Mr. Speaker, and that's the casino deal that we discussed in this Assembly to some extent in the previous months, and specifically I would like to talk about the VLT [video lottery terminal] situation. What's the Premier's position on the number of VLTs in Saskatchewan?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just to provide members with a few more details about the pasture situation where we would like patrons to operate these, Mr. Chairman, we've also put in place funding of \$120,000 to assist patron groups to set up business entities and receiving sort of training they would need. But it is our preference here that we would continue turning the operation of these over to the patrons. And I gave the member a chance to state the NDP position. There's many issues to discuss, but I hope he'll do that before the night's over because I think that is important, whether or not the NDP believe we should operate these pastures that the federal government have gotten out of, or whether or not it's important to facilitate the patrons doing that.

With respect to the number of VLTs, the member will know, because I think he's had discussions with the chief of the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] about both the potential sale of the casino that we did discuss before the session started, but earlier on, I'm sure he will know that it is the position of the FSIN, they've requested to have more VLTs

in the SIGA [Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority Inc.] casinos. Mr. Chairman, we're earnestly considering that request.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. What sort of increase would there be to the number of VLTs? What does the government have planned?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, those numbers are subject to a dialogue between the FSIN and the government, and there's no announcement to make just yet. But we want to conduct ourselves in a professional manner, as I'm sure the member would understand, and so we're not prepared to discuss those negotiations or the numbers that we're talking about on the floor of the House when no final decision has been announced.

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

Mr. Broten: — What is the percentage . . . [inaudible] . . . of increase the number of VLTs that Saskatchewan could be looking at?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It's the same question, Mr. Chairman, and the answer's the same as well.

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

Mr. Broten: — In which communities would we be looking at, is the government looking at increasing the number of VLTs in, throughout the province or in certain locations?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we're negotiating with respect to SIGA so it would be SIGA communities if there's to be any change.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know a few months ago the Premier wanted to sign, claims he wanted to sign, an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with the FSIN on several gaming matters. I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, from *The StarPhoenix* on February 12, 2014.

The deal would also grant the FSIN and SIGA the power to offer online gaming and lift the limits on how many video lottery terminal (VLTs), can be placed in each building. It would also allow for the creation of new VLT "gaming houses," Bellegarde said. In an interview Tuesday, Bellegarde said VLT limits have limited SIGA's profits and this provision will "let the market . . . [decide]."

Mr. Chair, my question to the Premier: is it his intention to let the market decide what the appropriate number of VLTs should be in the province?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — No.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So if it's not the market that would be deciding, and it sounds as though Chief Bellegarde believes that it would be the market deciding, based on the MOU that the Premier said that he wanted to sign with the FSIN, through what mechanism will it be determined the appropriate level of VLTs in Saskatchewan communities?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, we respect the partnership we have with FSIN and SIGA and I don't want to negotiate anything on the floor of the House in estimates. I will say that one indicator perhaps might be population growth, which has been significant, thankfully, for the province of Saskatchewan. But we're not going to get into specific questions. I'm not sure where they're coming from. Perhaps we can also revisit the casino deal itself in the House. I'm happy to answer those questions. But we won't be negotiating. We have a partner in this respect that we want to deal with in a professional way and that's how we'll conduct our business.

The Chair: — The Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's been said by Chief Bellegarde in the article February 12th, 2014, "In an interview Tuesday, Bellegarde said VLT limits have limited SIGA's profits, and this provision will 'let the market dictate.'" So that's the MOU that this Premier claims that he was ready to sign on to with the FSIN, Mr. Speaker, according to Chief Bellegarde, that this was the reality, the market decide. I asked the Premier, Mr. Chair, whether or not the market would be decided in the appropriate level of VLTs. The Premier said no. It sounds as though the FSIN is of the position, Mr. Speaker, that it ought to be the market that decides.

So my question is without . . . The Premier doesn't have to give away the trade secrets and the negotiations going on, but Saskatchewan people should have the right to know how in fact the increase in the number of VLTs in communities throughout Saskatchewan will in fact be determined.

The Premier mentioned population as a possibility, but surely there is more information that could be provided so communities know whether or not the number of VLTs in their communities will be increasing.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, the member has a copy of the MOU. He knows exactly what's in the MOU. It was furnished to him. It was furnished to his deputy leader because we were seeking unanimity of the House. We knew the Crown corporations protection Act was voted on unanimously by the House, and so it was our view that for it to change we needed unanimous support. And that's why the government and FSIN reached out to the member that just asked the question. It's why we reached out to his deputy leader. He has the MOU. He

knows what is, or not, in the MOU and I think he can answer his own question.

We're bringing in a copy here but we . . . Maybe you've lost yours, but you have . . . You know what was in the MOU with respect to VLTs, and I'm sure you also understand it's not how you've characterized it.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, my question to the Premier: through what mechanism will the increase in VLTs be determined? What sort of consultations are occurring around this decision? Because it can have a very big impact for communities. And what is the timeline for these consultations and this decision to be made? What are the timelines associated with it?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I've got a copy of the MOU here, and so just a question or so ago the Leader of the Opposition said, what's in the . . . characterized a quote from the chief and said, so in the MOU you're going to go to some market-based system. And I'll read it. He's got a copy because they at least considered it, this idea for a moment before he called his scrum on that day.

It says that "The provisions relating to the number of electronic gaming machines that may be located at casinos operated by SIGA." That's point (b) of a section that talks about us entering into good-faith discussions regarding the gaming framework agreement. And that's the answer to the member's question.

The number of . . . slots, really they are, in the casinos, the number of slots in SIGA casinos are dictated by the gaming framework agreement that we have with the FSIN. In order to make any changes at all, we have to reopen that agreement, and obviously that's something the two parties agree to do. It is the subject currently of negotiations. And you know, loosely I would say that population is an indicator.

I wonder if the member opposite would tell us and members of the committee whether or not in principle he opposes any increase to the slots in SIGA casinos?

The Chair: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We weren't part of the secret negotiations that this government engaged in with respect to the MOU and the lack of transparency that this government displayed as they tried to do a fast one, Mr. Speaker.

I want to quote from the story, Mr. Speaker, *The StarPhoenix* on February 12th, 2014:

The deal would also grant the FSIN and SIGA the power to offer online gaming, and lift the limits on how many video lottery terminals (VLTs) can be placed in each building. It would also allow for the creation of new VLT "gaming houses," Bellegarde said.

In an interview Tuesday, Bellegarde said VLT limits have limited SIGA's profits, and this provision will "let the

market dictate."

Mr. Speaker, so there's the discussion of the increase in the VLTs. What's also mentioned, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier's intention for the creation of VLT gaming houses. Could the Premier please expand what are these VLT gaming houses, how many would be existing, and in what communities?

[16:45]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — You know, Mr. Chairman, he's quoting a third party about what I said. These are not . . . Gaming houses is not something I said. We're talking about slots in casinos. So he can read the article. I'm reading the MOU.

And, Mr. Chairman, let's be very clear. One of the first people aware of or involved in the discussion of the potential sale of the casinos to SIGA, to FSIN was the member that asked the question. That member, I say — and I'm sure some members on this side of the House would perhaps be disappointed, but I thought it's the only way that we can make progress on this file — he knew about the potential before some members on this side of the House. Why is that, Mr. Chair? I'm glad to get these facts on the record.

About the third week of January — I'll furnish the member with the dates, although he lived this, so he'll know them — I met with Chief Bellegarde. We talked in very conceptual terms about what might be possible. We talked about the fact that the government wanted to negotiate the CDC [community development corporation] proceeds. We thought if we could take the proceeds of gaming that goes to the community development corporations and focus them on economics and education, especially in education where we're now seeing some excellent results from initiatives that we've tried through the joint task force with the FSIN. By the way, we've doubled that funding in the budget.

Mr. Chairman, we were very hopeful about that change. We were hopeful too about building capacity with SIGA, if this agreement could happen between the Government of Saskatchewan and SIGA.

I did say to the chief, I said, though we campaigned very solemnly — twice, our party did — on not changing certainly the spirit and intent of *The Crown Corporations Act*, in other words, not selling things listed in the Act to anybody, including SIGA, and one of those was the casinos. So I said to him, Chief, in order for us to proceed, you've got to sit down with Mr. Broten — I'm quoting myself — with the Leader of the Opposition . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, that's never good, is it?

I asked him to do that, and within days he did. At least that's what he reported back. He said he presented the general outline of what was possible if we could have unanimous agreement. So the truth is, he was involved in the negotiations earlier than most members in this House were involved in the negotiations.

And my understanding from the chief was that there were no particular objections. Why in the world would we take the next

steps that we took to advance this concept, to bring it to our caucus, to bring it to cabinet, say I think this is possible because I believe the chief's met with the Leader of the Opposition, and he's told them there's no particular objections to it. He was involved in this secret deal three days after we first talked about it with the chief, involved in this secret deal before most members on this side of the House.

You can't have it both ways, Mr. Chairman. You cannot say one thing because it's your political advantage in estimates or question period if you said something else or if you did something else.

We will negotiate in good faith with the FSIN per the gaming framework agreement. There may well be an expansion of slot machines in the casinos. The economy's grown. Some of the markets have grown. They'd be limited obviously to those communities. They'd be limited to those slots where those casinos exist, Mr. Chairman, as far as the government's plans are right now. And we'll undertake those negotiations in good faith with the FSIN.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. As usual, the Premier's completely mischaracterizing what happened. Interesting, Mr. Chair, that he can recount of a meeting that he was not in attendance at, Mr. Speaker. My question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier: were gaming houses part of the discussions? Yes or no?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I recall the term gaming houses being raised and not fully understanding it. I was sort of filling in the blanks myself, thinking of maybe what you'd find in some of the northern states, if you drive through Montana.

But I think it's clear what the government's position was in terms of the wording in the MOU, which the member has because he was in on the secret deal within days of us raising it with the chief. He at least knew about it certainly and, according to the chief, didn't seem to have any major problems with it then.

Here's what the wording says: "Without limiting paragraph 1 of this Section, the Parties commit to enter into good faith discussions relating to the GFA [that's the gaming framework agreement] including . . ." And (b) is, "The provisions relating to the number of electronic gaming machines that may be located at casinos . . ."

So FSIN may raise this other concept. I'm not quite clear on what that concept is. But the government's been pretty clear, both in the MOU and I think in negotiations that the minister has had — we have the Minister of the Gaming Authority here and the Minister of First Nations — that to the extent there would be any increase in the slot machines at all, they'd be in casinos.

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

Mr. Broten: — So to be clear, Mr. Chair, is it the government's

position that they are not open to the prospect of gaming houses?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well the casino is a gaming house, I guess, Mr. Chairman. I have just answered the question. To the extent there will be any additional slot machines, they'll be in the casinos.

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

Mr. Broten: — What's the government's intention with respect to online gaming?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, as a part of the MOU again — and the member has a copy, but we'll furnish him with another one — as a part of the MOU that was not signed and not executed because the New Democrats wouldn't, couldn't support it for whatever reason, we did indicate that the negotiation of some potential for online gaming by SIGA would be part of the agreement, which is of great interest to them. It is something they raise on every occasion.

In light of the fact the MOU has not moved forward, we've indicated that, save for a discussion around the number of slots in casinos, we're not interested at this point in moving forward with any of the other elements in the MOU.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the big concerns I heard from First Nations leaders was about the plans within the MOU that would greatly constrain to what projects and what initiatives dollars from community development corporations could go. Currently, Mr. Chair, CDCs provide a fairly wide range of support to different initiatives like economic development, social development, justice initiatives, educational development, recreational facilities operation and development, senior and youth programs, cultural development, community infrastructure development and maintenance, health initiatives, and other charitable purposes.

So for the Premier to want to have that constrain the work of the CDCs, the funding of the CDCs, to simply go to education, employment, and economic development is a fairly significant change from where dollars have traditionally be used for. So my question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier is, why was he so adamant on that point?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well once again the answer, I think, is in the MOU the member has. And I now have the dates clarified because again earlier on tonight — today, this afternoon; it only seems like night — he characterized it as a secret deal. So the first time we discussed this earnestly, this idea with Chief Bellegarde, was in the Premier's office, just over here, 21st of January. It was a Tuesday. He met with the member on Friday. He met with the member on Friday and told him about the terms of it.

So I hope he'll at least, when he takes to his feet for his next question, acknowledge that maybe it wasn't a secret. And if it was, it wasn't a very good one because he found out about it three days after we had talked about it with the chief. I think he should do that, would he want to have the credibility to continue to be able to characterize the deal that didn't happen — as he has done so, as he did so the day that he scrummed here, and as he's done so on the floor of the House in a way that does not accurately characterize the deal at all — a deal he knew about three days, four days, three days after I first had the discussion with the chief about what was possible. I think he would probably want to do that. I think he's a fair man.

With respect to the issue of CDCs, Mr. Chairman, we'll make no apology for the fact that we would like to see — if the chiefs would agree, and that's why we put it into the agreement — a greater focus of the proceeds that go to community development corporations in education and economic development. We would want to make it, if we could, we'd want the chiefs to make it exclusively about education and employment and economic development.

These are the number one issues facing this province today in terms of the gap that exists between Aboriginal unemployment and overall unemployment. Now that gap's been decreasing a little bit thankfully; not enough, but it's been decreasing. We've seen month-over-month reports that Aboriginal unemployment is on the way down, but it's still far too high. There is a large gap. And so to the extent there are resources at all from the proceeds of gaming, we would like the CDCs — it's not our money; it's theirs — but we would like them to focus on economic development and education especially, Mr. Chair, when we now know there are some proven programs that are working.

We think of what's going on in the Saskatoon school system and their co-operation on the trade side. We think of what's going on at SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. You know, Mr. Chair, our government has increased funding to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies by 48 per cent and the reason is, is because what they do works. They develop training programs that connect First Nations to employment.

And so we would like the proceeds from this industry, from gaming, to be focused on greater engagement of First Nations in the economy. And we thought the best way to do that is if we were to focus the proceeds of gaming on education issues and employment issues — economic development, I would say. And, Mr. Chair, I would just ask the hon. member, what is his position?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, no MOU was provided to us until we made our position public, and the Premier knows this very well. If the Premier thinks that he conducted himself in an open and transparent manner with respect to this, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and this government are dreaming, Mr. Speaker.

CDCs fund a lot of good programs and initiatives within the community. I recently read a report from *The Battlefords News-Optimist* about the local CDC donating \$50,000 to the

hospital for three new infant warmers, which allows the hospital to comply with the neonatal resuscitation program. So it's clearly important.

And when we're talking . . . When I was listing the different areas that CDCs dollars can be directed to, someone said, play hockey, as if that was a bad thing, Mr. Speaker. Well in a long winter on a First Nations in Saskatchewan, I think hockey's a pretty healthy and pretty constructive thing for the youth on-reserve, so that they're staying healthy. They're staying active and directing their efforts in a positive way. So to have it constrained only to these items, Mr. Speaker, I see is a concerning thing. My question to the Premier: does he recognize the consequences of restricting the CDC dollars in the way that he wanted to?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, we have no problems with the proceeds of the CDCs being used for hockey or sports, but truly first things first, Mr. Chairman, and there are a number of First Nations leaders who agree. First thing, education. Very first thing we should be . . . every nickel we can funnel to that. And you know, we've doubled the budget for JTF [joint task force] and we need to do more, but every other dollar we could find from the proceeds of gaming, education must be first.

This is a 100-year, intractable problem in the province of Saskatchewan where such a large portion of our population is underengaged in the economy, and the province is poorer for it. We wouldn't need the temporary foreign worker issue if we could fully engage First Nations people. We wouldn't. This place would be better if we were to say, every single available resource of the government or of First Nations-run businesses like expanded gaming, if first and foremost we focused on education and economic development and yes, we'll do sports and recreation, but first things first.

[17:00]

And what we were saying to the chief and what we said in our MOU wasn't anything different than what we said in our plan for growth with respect to this issue. It's going to be education and the economy. And I guess here we don't agree. And this is a good debate to have, and I appreciate the fact that the member has raised it. His view is that we can continue the CDCs as they are and our view is, well it's none of our business. That'll happen if that's what chiefs desire but we'll continue to use whatever moral suasion we can to say, let's focus more on the economy and let's focus more on education.

Mr. Chairman, here is what the chief of the FSIN said publicly with respect to what the member just said. The Leader of the Opposition just stood up and said, we didn't get an MOU until after we went public. Well he knows it was described and shown to the deputy leader the weekend before, his deputy leader. He knows that.

And here's something else he knows and I know it as well. Here's what Chief Bellegarde said February 11th, reported on CJME. He's talking about the Leader of the Opposition. Yes, I was talking to him all weekend. In fact on Sunday I offered, can we meet with Premier Wall to clear the air, get on the same

page? He said no. Do you want a copy of the MOU? This is the chief now saying what he said to the Leader of the Opposition. He asked the Leader of the Opposition, do you want a copy of the MOU? He said no.

Why? Why would you say no, I don't even want to look at the MOU? If you were concerned about these issues and you have the chief of the FSIN saying, we want to talk . . . He had called me. He said, would you talk to the Leader of the Opposition? I said, you bet I would. I'm here all weekend.

The quote goes on to say, this is what the chief said, "That's why I'm disheartened, and I'm really disappointed in what's happened with this because we're getting caught with a good opportunity. Again it's not rushed." That was the other concern we had heard from the New Democrats. The concern is, well this is going to be rushed.

So I said on the weekend, Chief, you can let the NDP know if we want to take months to do this, we can. We can introduce the idea. We can talk about legislative changes in the fall. We're serious about the possibilities of this particular deal, but we need unanimous consent of the House. And so if it's more time they need, they can have it. He knows this to be true.

And here's the chief of the FSIN saying, I wanted to give him a copy of the MOU, and he said no. And then he stands in the House and calls it a secret deal. He calls a scrum and says this is a secret deal, as if this was never offered. Mr. Chairman, it goes against credibility to say these things.

But with respect to CDCs and with respect to any of their proceeds, it will always be the position of the Government of Saskatchewan that recreation and other quality of life initiatives are important for all of us, First Nations and non-First Nations. But when it comes to this gap that we face in this province, this gap of opportunity for First Nations, our number one priority will be education and economic development and greater engagement for First Nations, and we'll make no apology for it, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, the Premier talks about not being rushed. If the Premier was honestly wanting to sign the MOU, Mr. Speaker, he's the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan. He could sign any MOU he wants, Mr. Speaker. He could bring forward the necessary legislation in the House and follow the proper open and transparent procedures, but that was not in his interest at all, Mr. Speaker.

During the most recent review of the gaming framework agreement, the government refused to change the formula for the casino revenue crossover. The crossover means this, Mr. Speaker, that the provincial government's General Revenue Fund receives approximately \$10 million more from SIGA casinos than the First Nations Trust receives from Sask Gaming casinos every year.

So my question, Mr. Speaker: if the Premier, if he truly wants First Nations to have more resources for things like education, for things like employment and economic development, then why not address the crossover and allow SIGA to keep their

profits and invest them in initiatives that would help First Nations people here in the province? Why won't he address the crossover?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, that's an interesting line of logic from the member on his preamble. He said with respect to this casino issue, he said, you should have just done the deal anyway. Why didn't you just ignore me? That's what he's basically saying to members of the committee: just do whatever you want.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, we campaigned on the preservation of the Crown ownership protection Act. That Act was passed in this House unanimously when the Sask Party voted with the NDP. And I've said very publicly, in order for that Act to ever be changed short of a mandate from the people in a general election, we'd have to have another unanimous vote.

So that's why we reached out to the member. That's why I met with the chief on the 21st of January, and on the 26th of January he brought the member into the deal, gave him the general concept of the deal. That's why we furnished him with the details of the MOU prior to the weekend. That's why, when they said this is not enough time, we reached out over the weekend through the chief, said Chief, let me know if we should talk on the phone. If it's a time factor, we'll give it to them. There's no place to hide for the Leader of the Opposition on this issue because he knows there was nothing secret about it. He knew about it before most other members of the House.

Secondly, he knows, he absolutely understands that if timeline was a factor the chief told him, at my request, that the government would work with and accommodate his concerns. These are the facts of the case, the facts of the case.

The FSIN and Chief Bellegarde and his predecessors have done a good job of pointing out that they would like to see more revenue as a result of the agreement. It is an agreement that was struck, the principles of which set by the New Democratic government some time ago, the GFA. Mr. Chairman, we do try to respond to issues of the FSIN. We have not yet responded to their request for a bigger share, that's true. And maybe again, if it's . . . Maybe the position of the NDP should be stated for the record, if they agree with the FSIN. And fair enough, because it's an ongoing dialogue we have. And I would ask again the Leader of the Opposition, say should we do that? I'd appreciate his advice.

But we have moved in other areas. In this particular budget, we doubled the funding for the joint task force initiatives. Again these are some of the education initiatives that we're finding bear results. So 3 million to \$6 million there. Overall, Mr. Chair, we have \$189 million in the government's budget for First Nations and Métis initiatives. That's a 2.4 per cent increase over last year. We have literacy camp funding, Community Literacy Fund. We have 1.2 million and 1 million in capital for 15 new pre-K [pre-kindergarten] spaces; 276 million for supports for learning which go to support all of our vulnerable students, and obviously within that cohort you'd find First Nations and Métis people.

Mr. Chairman, we know the issue of the split of the funding with respect to gaming proceeds is there. We've agreed to disagree to the extent, so far with the FSIN. If the Leader of the Opposition has some advice to the contrary, I would be very open to it.

The Chair: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In 2007 there were adjustments to the crossover which affected the percentages and the amounts, allowing SIGA to maintain more of its profits. And I think, Mr. Speaker, this is something that should be revisited.

The government has said no in the most recent review. They said no. It sounds as though the Premier maintains that position that they're not open to addressing the crossover. I think it would be an important step to allow SIGA to maintain more of its profits and make the right investments into First Nations communities and into First Nations lives, for the people living now and for their grandchildren and for their great-grandchildren, Mr. Speaker. I do think that would be an appropriate move. It would require the right discussions for the speed and the extent to which the crossover would be corrected, Mr. Speaker, but I think that is something that is worthy of consideration and worthy of discussion.

Mr. Speaker, moving or switching gears now to another topic, on the issue of seniors' care we know, Mr. Speaker, that it was this government that scrapped the minimum care standard guarantee, a base level of care to each senior. It was their decision. But we haven't received yet a decent explanation for that move. So my question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier: can the Premier explain why those regulations were scrapped instead of being strengthened?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for the question. You know, early on, well throughout the first term of our government and then even into completion in the second term, we noted that the guidelines being used by the province of Saskatchewan were from the, I think the 1950s is what the minister has reported, when obviously the standard and quality of care for seniors was much lower than it is today just as a result of advancing time and improvements in approaches to care.

And, Mr. Chairman, I note that the Leader of the Opposition has on many, many occasions stood up and again said, I think erroneously, that there's no longer a minimum standard of care. Mr. Chairman, what we replaced those 1950s guidelines or standards with was something called the *Program Guidelines for Special-care Homes* dated April 2013, and so it's 193 pages of guidelines.

And let me just read from the introductory paragraph called the "Purpose of the Ministry of Health Special-care Home Program Guidelines Manual." It says the following:

... all Special-care Homes and other designated facilities that provide this care shall operate in accordance with the standards sets out in the *Program Guidelines for*

Special-care Homes.

That sounds like standards to me, Mr. Chairman.

The standards set within this manual are considered minimum standards [sounds like minimum standards in the manual] and must be adhered to in publicly funded facilities that offer long-term care services to residents in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chairman, the contents — 193 pages of these guidelines that constitute minimum standards. And in here is detailed information on the rights and responsibilities for those who are obviously patients, residents in special care homes: consents; access to service; type of care in terms of long-staying care; adult day programs; palliative care; respite care; convalescent care; rehabilitative care; night care; resident charges including, you know, what's done with that with respect to residents; income security and assistance programs; the prescription drug plan; what are the policies with respect to personal belongings; power of attorney; research and education; resident trust accounts; safekeeping of valuables.

There's an assessment policy guideline in terms of what the assessment tools are being used for residences, Mr. Chairman. It goes on and on. We can go down the list. But to characterize the system as not having any minimum standards is just not correct.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, it's very clear to Saskatchewan people that these guidelines are not working. We continue to hear, Mr. Speaker, stories of Saskatchewan families coming forward, talking about a quality of care that is not acceptable, that is not bringing dignity for their loved ones in a hospital setting, Mr. Speaker, in long-term care settings.

When we have stories of individuals being forced to soil themselves because there's no one there to help them to the bathroom, that shows the guidelines aren't working, Mr. Speaker. We have instances where families have to hire private care providers to come into the hospital simply to ensure that their loved one has help with meals. That shows the guidelines are not working, Mr. Speaker. When we hear from individuals, I think of Don Gunderson, who came to the Assembly, who talked about visiting his wife and seeing her slumped over in her chair because there were not enough staff to stop in and to ensure that she was in a comfortable and appropriate position. That shows, Mr. Chair, that the guidelines are not working, that they're inadequate.

Now this government, Mr. Speaker, likes to talk about targets. And I think talking about targets and having targets is a good thing. That's why I'm puzzled, Mr. Speaker. I'm puzzled why this government is so stubborn, so stubborn on the issue of seniors' care. So my question, Mr. Chair, to the Premier: why not at least implement targets when it comes to minimum standards and staffing ratios?

[17:15]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, any time there are incidents of neglect — obviously this is not something purposeful done by any of the front-line staff in the health care system — we take it very seriously because these are family members and these are loved ones. And, Mr. Chairman, we know we need to do better in the system.

I would posit today that though we need to do more, we are doing better than the days when members opposite sat here because, Mr. Chairman — here's the logic — roughly the same number of long-term care beds today in the province of Saskatchewan, roughly. We're actually adding to them. We're actually adding long-term care beds when members opposite closed them in government. But roughly the same today. And 750 full-time equivalents in terms of providers, more health care providers in long-term care facilities. So although it's not where we want it to be yet, we know then logically it is better than where it was. And we are going to continue making progress.

Here are the facts of the matter for the member opposite. Since 2007 full-time equivalents' jobs have grown in all nurse categories. This is for long-term care staffing ratios. Licensed practical nurses, up 37.4 per cent under our government; registered nurses, up 9.3 per cent; care aides, up 9.4 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, we know there is more work to do. But I would offer what the folks at the Wascana Rehab have offered about the continuum we're on, the continuum of improvement, when we were offered this quote. Actually it's a result of questions with respect to lean but relative to this issue. From the Wascana Rehab Centre: "Ten years ago, it was not at all unusual . . ."

Ten years ago, it was not at all unusual for residents to be left in bed for the day at the Wascana Rehab Centre [this would have been under your system] when we were short-staffed. As part of our cultural shift journey, this no longer happens.

My point is that we still have incidents that are unacceptable, but I would argue because we have now more staff, considerably more staff, 745 more long-term care front-line staff, we are in a better spot to deal with these issues than we were when we had members opposite that quite frankly talked about these things but they weren't acting on them in terms of deploying more nurses, more care aides into the system.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, the Premier can talk about his cultural shift journey all he wants. But the fact of the matter is Saskatchewan seniors, Saskatchewan patients aren't getting the quality of care that they deserve, and the Premier suggests as though somehow these are isolated incidents. They're not. They're happening throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing examples time and time again of families who are suffering, families whose loved ones are not receiving the care that they need. The government's record on this, Mr. Chair, is not something to brag about and something to boast about.

When the Saskatoon Health Region put forward their urgent requests they identified to provide the type of care that they would want to provide, Mr. Chair, that they would need 450

care aides. Now I recognize that would be a huge jump and an important, a big step, Mr. Speaker, but the health region, in a moderate way, scaled back what they asked for from the urgent request fund. They asked for 38, but even that was too much for this government, and they only gave 19 care aides.

We have examples from the Heartland Health Region, Mr. Speaker, where they state that they struggle to deliver 2.5 hours of care per day. They're struggling to meet that mark. So this government, instead of strengthening the standards, instead of setting good targets, what do they do? They water them down. They gut them, Mr. Speaker, and don't have the right targets and the right standards there for seniors in the province.

So my question again to the Premier, Mr. Chair: why scrap, why scrap the standards instead of strengthening them?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We scrapped the standards because they were from 1950. That's why we scrapped the standards. And they were inadequate. The question is, why in the world for 16 years of NDP government didn't they update the standards? Because the old ones have been scrapped, and we have 193 pages of standards today that speak specifically to minimum care. That's the fact of the matter.

It is the surprising position of this new Leader of the NDP that we should be operating on 1950s guidelines because he keeps saying, why did you scrap the guidelines? I assume he thinks we should still have them. Because they're not adequate on account of it was 1950, Mr. Chairman.

We have updated those guidelines, and more to the point we have added care aides. He references that. We have added nurses, licensed practical nurses. We have added registered nurses to the long-term care system, 750 full-time equivalents. And we know, Mr. Chairman, there is more work that's needed. We know we needed the emergent fund. The member will say it's not enough. He won't say how much is enough, but he'll say it's not enough. We've added that fund.

We know we needed to rejuvenate some facilities. I think within about a year of us getting elected, we moved on 13 long-term care facilities outside of our major centres that had been long neglected by the previous government. In fact, Mr. Chairman, the work of the government, the task of the government early on and remains so today was, the task was challenging and daunting because of the situation we found ourselves in after 16 years of New Democratic government. For example, in October 31st of 2013 in *The StarPhoenix*, the president of the council on aging had this to say: "The reason for the LTC bed capacity problem isn't complex."

This is not the Sask Party. This is the council on aging. Here's what it says:

The reason for the LTC bed capacity problem isn't complex. Saskatchewan stopped investing in new subsidized LTC starting in the mid-1990s. [Who was the Minister of Health around then?] Thus the number of beds and dollars for staff began to fall at just about the time the population of older adults and others who need LTC began

increasing.

StarPhoenix. Not a politician, the council on aging.

The reason for the LTC bed capacity problem isn't complex. Saskatchewan stopped investing in new subsidized LTC starting in the mid-1990s. [Actually what he could add is the NDP were closing beds.] Thus the number of beds and dollars for staff began to fall at just about the time the population of older adults and others who need LTC began increasing.

So, Mr. Chairman, what we needed to do as a government early on was first of all reverse the process of bed closures to replace some very old facilities. We also sought to add some new beds in Saskatoon. We partnered with a faith-based organization, the Catholic Health Ministry, to add new beds, including a dementia unit in Saskatoon because we did have — inherited — this bed capacity problem.

And what did the member say when I think you were the Health critic or the critic involved in the speeches? You were certainly supporting Ms. Atkinson at the time in a constant opposition to new health care beds delivered by the Catholic Health Ministry. And dare I say I think the reviews are in on that particular long-term care facility, and the residents there and their families would not agree with you, the NDP, or their opposition to that in the first place.

So we have sought to increase the number of beds in the province, to rejuvenate LTC [long-term care] facilities. And more importantly, because we will not address this problem — and we're not there yet — but we will not address it to the extent we need to unless we have obviously the complement of workers that we need, and that's why there's 745 more full-time equivalents, care aids, RNs [registered nurse], LPNs [licensed practical nurse] working specifically in long-term care now than when we took office in 2007.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, it's interesting how the Premier leaves out the actions that occurred in government from '82 to '91 and the conditions that were placed on the government following that because of the financial wreck that was left. Interesting how he conveniently leaves that out.

And I wish, I wish, Mr. Chair, I wish, Mr. Chair, that the Premier would spend as much time focusing on the past decades as he would listening to the stories that we hear now, Mr. Speaker. I remember talking to one husband, and he talked about visiting his wife in the care facility, Mr. Speaker, and looking at her feet. And, Mr. Chair, her toenails had grown around. She had horrible foot care. It was not happening, the proper care that she needed. He talked about the dressings, Mr. Chair, that were not being changed as often as they should because of the chronic short-staffing. So I wish the Premier would spend as much time listening to those stories from Saskatchewan families as he does looking at the decades past.

Mr. Chair, I want to talk about another issue that we've been discussing here on the floor of the Assembly, and that of course is the lean initiative clawback. School boards have raised

significant concerns about the lean initiative clawback, about how they were surprised, told one thing on budget day and then received a very rude awakening in the weeks following. My question: how can the Premier defend the lean initiative clawback in our education system, especially at a time when the needs in the classroom are so great?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, it's not a . . . We disagree with the school boards and their characterization of what this is. It is not a lean clawback. It is an efficiency target, and we make no apology for that. We've asked the health regions to do the same thing.

We've provided significant increases in operating funds to the school boards since we came to office. And we want all of us, including the Government of Saskatchewan that has now over the life of our own FTE [full-time equivalent] initiative I think reduced the size of government by about 1,800, 1,900 full-time equivalents . . . We have sought efficiencies in government, remembering we have to provide service. But we're not spending our money; we're spending the taxpayers' dollars. We want all of our funding partners in health care, the municipal level, and in education, we want them — especially the ones we direct fund, we fund all of it effectively — we want them to be finding efficiencies, a half of one per cent of operating, that's what it is, on an increase of over 2 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, 2007 to 2014 in terms of the budget this year, Saskatoon Public enrolment's up 15.9 per cent. We increased their operating by 33.2 per cent. Regina Public enrolment's up 5.7 per cent. They got a 30.8 per cent increase in operating. Regina Catholic, their enrolment is up 7.5 per cent. The operating dollars are up 26.8 per cent from our government. Saskatoon Catholic enrolment's up 12.2 per cent. Their operating dollars from the government is up 32.7 per cent. The Prairie Spirit enrolment is up 16.9 per cent. Their operating dollars are up 25.9 per cent. The Prairie Valley enrolment is down point two per cent. Their operating is up 17.7 per cent.

We want our partners to be looking for efficiencies. We need to ensure that it's sustainable for the long term. And where there are growth challenges, as we have done in the past in an unprecedented way, we will allocate dollars to that. In fact there's those dollars in this particular budget for those schools that are facing enrolment pressures.

[17:30]

And by the way, a couple of pieces of good news here. The very significant increase in operating dollars to school boards, that's one bit of good news. Here's the other bit of good news: we have enrolment increases in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact in addition to operating increases, Mr. Chair, we've also seen significantly increased capital dollars both on the renovation and improvement side, which were neglected for years under the NDP, but also in terms of new schools.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, just earlier today a number of colleagues were talking about the new bundling schools, a bundling project that will build a school in the hon. member's riding — one that he opposes, by the way, for ideological reasons.

Mr. Chair, the question, there's lean in his question. One of the processes we're using to properly design these schools is something called 3P [production preparation process] lean. We used it at the Moose Jaw Hospital. We used it at the children's hospital. We used it at the long-term care facility in Swift Current. I was at the last 3P lean event. I encourage the member to come, and I say this earnestly. I encourage him to participate in this process with front-line staff who are excited to be involved in the design of facilities.

Well the report back this morning is I think there's a lot of encouragement on the part of education stakeholders who have been involved in the design of the new schools as a result of the 3P lean process. And there'll be more news about that in the future.

But we hope that our friends across the way, and my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, will they sort of set aside these ideological objections to things because they're not funded the right way? I hope he'll take the approach that he took yesterday on the private involvement of the Regina bypass.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciated the fact that he would. I'm sure there's many in his party that would be upset with him, that he's supporting this major P3 project. The private operation of a highway is involved in this. But he's agreed that it's the right thing through his critic who commented on it. He agreed through the critic actually of Highways, who had basically read the statement from the minister right after the minister read it, ironically enough, but it was good because he supported it.

So we're going to continue to invest in education on the operating side. This is not a lean clawback. This is an efficiency target. There's a precedent for it in health. We're asking our school boards to be careful with their dollars obviously. We're asking them to find efficiencies where they can.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Chair, the Premier says it's not a lean initiative clawback, but that's very different from what the School Boards Association is saying. Here's a letter from the president of the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] to the minister. And here's a quote from the second page:

The new efficiency factor was the issue of concern raised most frequently by board members. In fact at the spring assembly, many trustees referred to the efficiency factor as the lean initiative clawback.

The letter goes on to say:

As an association, we had no forewarning of the introduction of the efficiency factor and were, like boards of education, taken by surprise. Lack of communication diminishes the trust relationship that education partners have worked so hard to build with the ministry.

And it goes on, Mr. Chair. So the Premier and this government has explaining to do to the SSBA when it comes to their lean initiative clawback.

I want, at this moment, to go back to an issue that we were discussing earlier on. When we were discussing the expenses related to the Co-Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board, the expenses that she has submitted and the taxpayers paid for, the Premier pledged earlier on that that information would be retrieved, and it would be provided here in the Assembly. Has that information been received yet in the Assembly?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition is fond of characterizing things he doesn't support as secrets. And I just want him to know and all members of the committee and people watching the debate to know that we were first talking about efficiency targets for third parties in our growth plan which is right here. It's page 57. It was a public document. It's accessible to the member through the Internet, or he could get a copy if he's interested.

Mr. Chairman, here's what we said in the growth plan in the fall of, I guess it was 2012 — 2012, that's when we said this — that as a part of our move towards more smaller, more effective government, because that's part of the vision of our government, we would:

Develop a two-year plan to require third parties that receive significant provincial funding such as health regions, school boards, and post-secondary institutions to demonstrate financial efficiencies such as joint supply purchasing, shared back office services, LEAN initiatives, and workforce adjustment targets that can be directed towards supporting front-line services.

We make no apologies for this, Mr. Chairman. We're expecting that of ourselves in government, to reduce the size of government, to find efficiencies, to focus on the front line, to have less in administration in Social Services so we can have 90 more child care workers, Mr. Chairman. That's the principle that we're asking all of our funding partners to pursue. And there's going to be disagreement from time to time with those partners who would like more money. We understand that, but the funding increases have been unprecedented. We've given to school boards and municipalities and health care, and you bet, we're asking all of us, all of our partners to do something about efficiencies. And we'll make no apology for that, Mr. Chairman. I think that's what our taxpayers in Saskatchewan deserve.

I understand the NDP don't support that, and that's fair enough. It again makes for at least a contrast and a debate tonight. I said earlier tonight we would provide members the information when it's available. I don't have it yet. I can tell members of the committee we've determined there to be one temporary foreign worker in governments — that's what we've determined — at crop insurance. And we believe the individual is an IT [information technology] worker. It was advertised extensively. The rules were followed for the temporary foreign worker program. That's the report I've been given. The number is one.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, it is the president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association who's saying that

they were caught off guard. That's who the Premier is mocking when they say about the issue of it being a surprise and about lack of communication.

The letter, Mr. Chair, from Janet Ford, president of the SSBA, says, "We had no forewarning of the introduction. Lack of communication diminishes the trust relationship." These are the words of an elected school board official representing the SSBA in the province. So the Premier should clearly listen about important educational stakeholders, elected trustees within our school system that are saying that they were caught off guard because of the lean initiative clawback.

I appreciate the Premier's response with respect to the little bit of information about the temporary foreign workers. The question, in particular, was about the expense claims for the Vice-Chair of the Social Services appeal board, the expense claims that she has put forward. Surely in the close to three hours that have passed, someone within the many people out in the ministry that are watching and listening could get that information, provide it to the Premier, so that he could share it with the Assembly. Is someone right now endeavouring to get that information?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised by the Minister of Education that individual boards were made aware of the request for efficiencies. We're talking about point five per cent of the budget. And while there was not the interaction with the SSBA proper, individual boards were made aware of this well before the budget.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of education's been very important to our government since we had the good fortune to get elected in 2007. And that's why we have significantly increased the operating dollars to school boards. It's why we're now fixing up schools. There is a number of projects that were just waiting and neglected under the NDP.

And there's a bit of revisionism going on over there, because the NDP want to characterize the relative wealth and prosperity of the province and therefore the strength of the treasury as starting on 2007. But we know they were sitting on hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in their fund they had, cash. We actually asked it to be cash. Originally it was just an accounting entry and then it was cash.

And so there was the chance for them to do something about long-term care facilities, but they didn't. There was a chance for them to renovate some schools, but they didn't. There was a chance that they could get ready for what might be coming in terms of growth, in terms of school capital, but nothing was done. When the NDP looked for efficiencies in the education sector, they closed schools, Mr. Chairman. That's the NDP lean initiative — one a month — 176 schools since the change in government.

Mr. Chairman, we have announced 40 new schools, increased renovation capital, increased operating dollars to the education sector. And, Mr. Chairman, you bet we're asking our education partners to find an efficiency, a half a point of operating. I guess the NDP are opposed to that. We think it's important that we

treat the taxpayers' money with the respect it deserves and that means asking all of the partners who spend tax dollars to do so as effectively as possible and to be constantly vigilant about the opportunity for efficiency.

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

Mr. Broten: — [Inaudible interjection] . . . When the member from Arm River-Watrous is talking about potatoes, you know they're scraping the bottom of the barrel with respect to their lines coming across the way.

Mr. Chair, well the Premier clearly has some explaining to do to the president of the SSBA, who's on a very different page than what was just provided.

But that actually wasn't what the question was at all. The question was, earlier on in the estimates, the Premier committed to providing the expense claims for the Vice-Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board. He said he was going to provide it. My question was, is it coming to the Assembly? Can it be tabled now at this time?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — When I have it, I'll furnish it to the member.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, this government has an army of individuals that are working. Every office is staffed up. When Premier's estimates are on, Mr. Speaker, everyone's on call. Well actually the army is in the galleries apparently, and that's why they can't get any information this afternoon. But, Mr. Chair, this isn't a hard piece of information to get. It's not a hard piece of information to have pulled from a file and sent in. We've had nearly three hours.

My question: why on earth, why on earth, Mr. Chair, did the Premier say that he was going to provide the expense claims for the Vice-Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board when he doesn't have it now? Why did he say he was going to provide it? Where is it?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, the answer is the same. As soon as I have the information, the member will have the information.

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

Mr. Broten: — Is someone trying to get it right now? We have time left on the clock. Where is this information?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the hard work of the people of Saskatchewan never stops, so I'd expect there would be people in government that are looking at this question and others that have been raised by the member opposite.

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

Mr. Broten: — When will the information be provided?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

[Interjections]

The Chair: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Just as soon as it's available to me.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, what is the Premier hiding? This is not a hard piece of information to get. It's not. It's an expense claim from a window of time for the Co-Chair of the Social Services Appeal Board. We talked about it at the beginning of estimates. There was a very clear commitment made by the Premier that the information would be provided to the Assembly, and in the hours that have passed, they have not been able to track this down. Will the Premier give a firm commitment of a time when it will be provided? It's not a hard request.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I promise this. I promise the member will not have to wait as long as the people of Saskatchewan have had to wait for him to have a single policy on his website. I promise they will not have to wait as long as they have had to wait for the Leader of the NDP to have a definitive explanation of what smart growth is, or where he's going to get all of the baskets and exactly what eggs will go into those baskets. They will not have to wait longer than they will for the NDP to get beyond the platitudes to offer something substantive to the people of the province who desire quality of life, who want to make sure we have an economy strong enough to reinvest into those quality of life measures.

Who will speak out for rural Saskatchewan when agriculture has been stressed out by a commodity backlog, Mr. Chairman? They're not going to have to wait that long. As soon as I have the information — I expect it'll be very, very shortly, maybe within the next 15 minutes, maybe later this evening we can courier it over, Mr. Chairman — we'll get that information over to the hon. Leader of the Opposition very, very soon.

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

[17:45]

Mr. Broten: — It's concerning, Mr. Speaker. We have an instance where the Minister of Social Services has said she did not have contact with her good friend who was the Chair, Vice-Chair . . . Co-Chair, pardon me, of the Social Services Appeal Board, that they had not discussed matters related.

We have the minister herself saying, Mr. Chair, that it probably would be better not to have a close friend as the Co-Chair for the review committee, review board, that actually looks at the decisions made by the minister. And we have a reluctance, Mr. Chair, of this government to provide the information. We had a

clear pledge that it would be provided. Despite the many, many individuals who are available to get that information and provide it to this Assembly, it has not occurred and it ought to do so very soon.

Mr. Chair, there have been a number of concerns around TransformUS. We've heard a lot of concerns from faculty, from students, from staff, and the general public about TransformUS, about what it means for our province's largest university and what it means for our province as a whole. People are especially concerned about the long-term ramifications of gutting colleges, eliminating specialized programs, and actually shrinking our province's largest university.

My question, Mr. Chair, is to the Premier: does he have any concerns with what is happening at the University of Saskatchewan through TransformUS?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I understand that the expense piece is coming soon. There's personal information, social insurance numbers, that sort of thing that need to be taken care of. But if he's looking for some sort of smoking gun, did the Vice-Chair talk to the minister and expense the . . . The answer's yes. They were talking about general issues. The minister wanted to consult with her about whether there should be just be one board, how many boards would be most effective for hearing. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I could tell you that the Minister of SLGA has confirmed that she talks to the chairman of the Gaming Authority, of SLGA.

There was another example as well that escapes me at this moment, but it'll come back to me a little bit later on, where Chairs appointed by the government . . . Cases are not discussed with Chairs, but policy advice is sought from them, as it would have been the case under the NDP. So we'll find out the information about the half-day expense that occurred for that meeting.

But if you're wondering whether the meeting happened, absolutely it did. And if you're wondering what was discussed, it was a general discussion about the number of boards, the efficacy of the appeal process. And that's precisely what we want our ministers to be engaged with when we're talking to Chairs of independent organizations. And I'd expect if you turned around and chatted with the member for Lakeview, he'd confirm that that kind of general policy discussion should happen with people that are qualified to serve in these positions.

Mr. Chairman, I want to also, in answer to the member's question, point out that over the life of our government, we've increased the operating budget at U of S [University of Saskatchewan] by 65 per cent — 65 per cent. I think by every reasonable measure, even his . . . And he's tough. He's got some measures for our government that are difficult to reach; I'm not sure we have yet. But I think even a reasonable measure by the Leader of the Opposition would say a 65 per cent increase in operating — never mind the health sciences, never mind the first student residence in a generation there funded by the government, never mind all the capital — is very significant to the University of Saskatchewan.

They have undertaken an initiative though for the long-term sustainability of that excellent institution. It's called TransformUS as the member has highlighted. And no doubt it's controversial, because they're looking at difficult decisions about the future of the institution. They are an autonomous and independent and venerated institution of higher learning in this province, one of the finest that we have in the country.

And we will accord them the independence they deserve to make these decisions — though they may be difficult, though some of them may be controversial — because I believe they're making them in the long-term interests of that institution. And if the context and the background is a government that has supported that institution in unprecedented ways, 65 per cent increase in operating funds, I think we should give the university the latitude to make the decisions, to look at the future carefully, and ensure the sustainability of the University of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, there's a big difference between ensuring the right questions are being asked, listening to the concerns that are being raised by respected academics, by staff, by students, there's a big difference between listening to those and taking that action, Mr. Speaker, and giving entire carte blanche to what is going on and saying everything is fine.

And, Mr. Chair, we need to ensure that the right questions are being asked and that there is confidence in the process and confidence in the outcomes. Because when we're talking about the University of Saskatchewan, and I don't question the minister's commitment to the university in a general sense, Mr. Speaker, but when we're making long-term decisions, we're making long-term decisions about the well-being of the institution, about programs being gutted, about specialized programs being cut, about major layoffs, about many faculty leaving and wanting to leave, Mr. Chair, this is really important. And that's why it's necessary that the right questions are being asked.

So beyond saying that everything is fine, everything is good to go, what is this government doing in order to ensure that the right questions are being asked and the long-term consequences are being evaluated?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, this is an independent institution. It gets a lot of public dollars to be sure, but the principle upon which our universities operate, I think a pretty solemn and important principle, is their independence. So I hear what the member's saying. He's saying, well ask them, I think you're saying, ask questions. What questions? What would he suggest the government do? Because questions are going to lead to answers, and then does the government dictate and say, well we don't accept that. You're ending that program. We reject that. Is that where the member is coming from, that the government would get that involved?

Mr. Chairman, we're not going to do that. Our job is to ensure there are proper funds at the University of Saskatchewan — 65 per cent increase in operating dollars since we took office. Our

job is to build capital projects at the university that are needed like the health sciences centre, like student residences, Mr. Chairman. Our job is to get the innovation side of that university as strong as possible through our capital partnership with VIDO [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization] and InterVac [international vaccine centre]. That's our job.

And then our job is to step back and respect the process that the university's undertaking, knowing that it's not going to be easy, knowing that they may take decisions with certain programs that maybe they've been there a long time. Maybe enrolment's down. Maybe they just think they need to take a different direction. Maybe there's consolidations that need to happen. Mr. Chairman, the Government of Saskatchewan are looking at those opportunities. We've asked our partners to do the same.

I don't think what serves either the university or the debate is . . . And I wasn't here for it, Mr. Chairman, though I know the member likes to ask me questions when I'm not here, but I heard the questions; I heard the questions that he asked. He was quoting a professor to be sure, but he quoted Professor Howe. When Professor Howe — who walked away from the process, by the way, didn't complete it — walked away, that's his right to do so. And it's also his right to express an opinion which went something like this, and the member paraphrased, “. . . that we might as well at the end of TransformUS rename the university Meewasin Valley community college.”

A couple of things about that quote. There is derision and a pejorative nature about community colleges in that quote. That they would be said by any . . . but then repeated by the Leader of the Opposition. As we think, community or regional colleges are an important part, frankly they're an important part of university extension in the province of Saskatchewan. That's point number one.

Point number two, if you're going to quote someone like that, you should be willing to stand in this House, Mr. Chairman, any member should be willing to stand in this House and agree or disagree with the characterization. Does he believe that if the university goes through TransformUS and makes these tough decisions that it might as well be Meewasin Valley community college? And does he agree that to characterize it in that sort of a derisive sense is an insult to the regional colleges across this province?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, that's an absolutely bizarre line of comments by the Premier. Absolutely bizarre, Mr. Chair.

SIAST plays an important role in Saskatchewan. Community colleges play an important role in Saskatchewan. Our universities play an important role in the province. And they each have unique roles. But when we have respected people on campus, Mr. Chair, very respected people coming to us and sharing concerns about what is happening, I think that needs to be listened to. I think we need to listen to those concerns, Mr. Chair.

We need to ensure . . . This isn't just a few fringe individuals on campus who are voicing concerns. This is a large chunk of the faculty, of the students, and of the staff. And it simply can't be

dismissed. There needs to have the right time. There needs to be the right consultation with the university community, with the city, because this has implications.

And, Mr. Chair, I love the University of Saskatchewan. I went to the University of Saskatchewan. I hope my kids go to the University of Saskatchewan, sorry for any of the Regina members in the room. But I want the best for the campus, and that means asking the tough questions and not simply saying everything is fine.

Mr. Chair, I've heard a lot of concerns about the Health Quality Council essentially being co-opted to serve as the provincial kaizen promotion office, with the mandate greatly changed, Mr. Chair. My question to the Premier: why was this decision made?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank the member for the question as well. I can say that obviously lean through the health system is about measurements. The Quality Council is also about measurements. So to that extent, they're going to intersect.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, so we have the Health Quality Council delivering programming around lean and then also evaluating the program around lean. My question to the Premier: does he see no concern with the Health Quality Council doing both of those things at the same time?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well I'm not sure I understand where the member is going. I think there might be another mischaracterization there that the Health Quality Council is somehow evaluating lean. Obviously the government's doing that, together with the regions. The Health Quality Council's very much about measurements in health care because we want to see improvement.

I think there has been the retainer for some academics at the University of Saskatchewan to provide some input into lean to the Health Quality Council, but we're comfortable there's no conflict here.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Chair, looking at the Health Quality's very own data, the government's own data, a number of concerning aspects that we see with respect to the state of health care and the delivery that patients are experiencing, we see from the Health Quality's very own website that adverse events are up. Overall satisfaction of patients is down. The number of patients satisfied with their pain management is down. The mortality rate for major surgery is up, and the rate of infections has jumped.

Yet when we see these concerns, Mr. Speaker, we actually have senior leadership from the Health Quality Council tweeting up a storm saying, "In '04 at Virginia Mason reported 204 patient

safety incidents per year, today 2,450, seen by many as a safety exemplar."

So now we have the Health Quality Council saying that a 1,100 per cent increase in critical incidents is somehow a good thing, going from 204 critical incidents to 2,450 critical incidents is somehow a sign of success.

My question to the Premier: how can he explain that logic, and should we brace ourselves for a 1,100 per cent increase in critical incidents in our care system?

[18:00]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I think it's the consensus, and certainly it's been reported to me by the Minister of Health that the consensus of health systems right around the world, and especially in North America, is that incidents have been under-reported. They've been under-reported historically for a very, very long time. And what we're seeing for those health care institutions that are deploying lean — things like the stop-the-line safety check system that Virginia Mason for example is doing — they're already reporting higher incidents because they are very much more diligently, in a front-line driven way, checking for incidents.

Mr. Chairman, the same is true for things like the surgical safety checklist. Some common sense things, people would say, but things that never happened without this lean initiative to make sure that a proper checklist was considered before surgeries begin. There is a likelihood that where that's happening as well incidents have gone up. I think in 2004, critical incidents in the system under the NDP, under the member for Lakeview when he was the Health minister, rose 60 per cent. I don't think that the system was falling down at that point. I think what we have seen over the last 10 years is improved reporting of the incidents, which is actually what we want to get to.

In the meantime it, you know, causes question period fodder, and so it should. But we need to have the context here. The context is that incidents, critical incidents, are on the rise in health care systems around North America, around the world as health care systems get better and more vigilant about safety, about patient care. And that is coming to a degree in these systems because of lean or lean-like initiatives.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, so is the Premier actually arguing that there were 2,246 critical incidents that were kept a secret at Virginia Mason back in 2004? Because these are things like deaths, major falls, things that would be reported. Is that what he's arguing?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It's an interesting question, Mr. Chairman. I mean, we're not going to now try to forecast what the incidents might be or might not be, given these certain initiatives to ensure greater safety in the system or what they were in other

facilities.

Safe to say that over the last little while, not just here but elsewhere in health care systems as we have these improved processes in place, the reports of critical incidents will increase. It doesn't change the resolve of government to do something about it. That's why we deploy more front-line staff. That's why we're using lean, frankly, to help solve some of the problems. It's why we're investing in health care capital. We're not accepting of these critical incidents, but it's important to note their numbers are likely to increase as we get better, as the system gets better at identifying them, reporting them, and doing something about them.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dale Schattenkirk is a lean black belt consultant from right here in Regina. He doesn't agree with the structure of the contract that this government has signed and thinks that it's strange that this government is spending \$40 million on the JBA [John Black and Associates] contract. And he questions the excessive use of Japanese terminology and questions why this government flies Japanese senseis from Japan to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, my question to the Premier: why did the government enter into this fat cash cow contract that is basically a licence to print money for the US consultant?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There was a competitive process for the lean contract, Mr. Chair, and it was won by the contractor who's currently being employed in the lean initiative across government. The individual the member quotes had an opportunity to bid. In fact he has got his start in lean I think because of the efforts of the former deputy minister of Health, currently deputy minister of lean, Dan Florizone, or at least been part of those initial teams. And so he also agrees that lean is important.

And once again I will point out that we have saved more money than the lean contract costs, Mr. Chairman. More importantly, more importantly we have seen improvements in the system that directly affect the lives of patients. Distributing the wrong medication errors have been virtually eliminated because of lean. The mental health facility unit in Five Hills, from 17 to one per year. One is too many, but it used to be 17. Defects in blood work have been reduced by 35 per cent to zero at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre. Blood clot screening tools performed 100 per cent of the time at St. Joe's hospital in Estevan; it was previously only used 20 per cent of the time.

There's a long list of leaning out the appointment process so people aren't languishing on a wait-list just to get a diagnosis. We know what it's done in terms of blood inventory management. It's why Manitoba is looking at lean. It's why WestJet announced today that they're going to lean out their system, and yes there is an application. Large organizations, commercial organizations that want to serve people will use lean. Large government organizations that want to better serve people will use lean.

His NDP friends in Manitoba have understood this. The corporate sector has understood this. Leading hospitals that we've already talked about in the debate in the United States are using this. The money we've saved is greater than the cost of the contract. Care is being provided. And, Mr. Chairman, I think it's probably why, in terms of issues raised this spring sitting, this particular issue has not actually made it much beyond the walls of the Legislative Assembly. There are concerns. We're careful to monitor them. We want to improve the lean process.

Well they should check with the people of the province. Check for those who are pretty happy about the blood work improvements at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre. Check for those who are pretty happy, including front-line workers, about a reduction in the distribution of the wrong medication, which was happening. These are all lean initiatives. We're going to continue with the process that's meant to find some efficiencies, but actually it's meant to provide a better patient care experience in the province of Saskatchewan.

There may be adjustments down the road. We're listening to front-line workers. But we'll not stop on this issue. We'll not stop, Mr. Chairman, investing in human resources in health care, building new health care capital, and constantly seeking to improve care, albeit more efficiently in terms of health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Chair: — Seeing no members wishing to ask questions, we will now vote the estimates. (EX01), central management and services in the amount of 5,824,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. (EX07), Premier's office in the amount of \$600,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. (EX04), cabinet planning in the amount of \$975,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX05), cabinet secretariat in the amount of 654,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Subvote (EX03), communications office in the amount of 3,342,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX08), the House business and research in the amount of \$442,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Subvote (EX06), members of Executive Council. That's statutory, for information purposes only, \$133,000. That's not voted.

Subvote (EX10), intergovernmental affairs in the amount of 4,587,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX11), francophone affairs in the amount of 784,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX12), Lieutenant Governor's office in the amount of 684,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2015, the following sums for Executive Council, \$17,892,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. There being no further business before the committee, I would invite a member to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Before the committee adjourns I would invite the Premier and the Opposition Leader to make any closing comments that they may have. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Thanks for your work to preside over the committee today. We thank the Table officers and Pages who've been here for this evening. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his questions and the debate we were able to have. And I especially want to thank the officials that assisted me tonight, this afternoon, and as well as the ministers who were very much engaged in assisting me with some of the questions that were offered up by the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Chairman, this is an important process in the spring sitting, the Premier's estimates, and we had an opportunity to discuss a number of important matters. And I do owe a debt of thanks to those officials and to my colleagues and to the member opposite for his questions.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll add my word of thanks to you for your role in ensuring that the afternoon goes smoothly, thank the Premier for the responses that he provided, thank all members in the Assembly for their participation this

afternoon either through the odd heckle or the odd word of advice perhaps, and thank all the officials that are here also serving in what they do. It's a shame it's only three hours. I'm told back in the day it used to go a lot longer. So with that, Mr. Chair, I wish everyone a good evening and once again thank everyone.

The Chair: — The Committee of Finance is adjourned.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. It being past the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands adjourned to 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:14.]

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd

Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Kevin Doherty

Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. June Draude

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Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

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Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority

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Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for the Lean Initiative

Hon. Ken Krawetz

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Hon. Tim McMillan

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Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Trade
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Don McMorris

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Telecommunications
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Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds

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Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Rob Norris

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Minister Responsible for First Nations,
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Hon. Gordon Wyant

Minister of Justice and Attorney General