



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

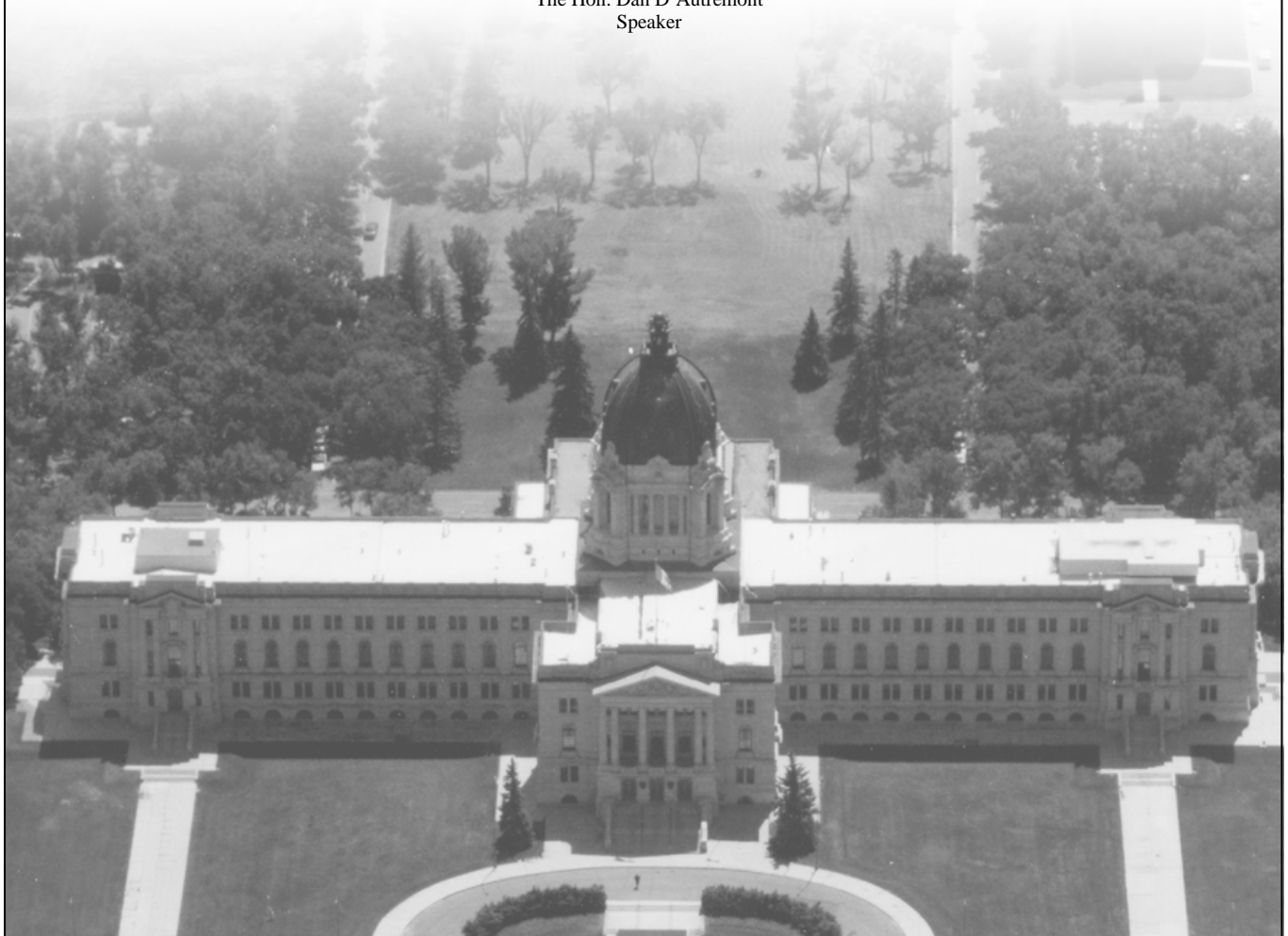
of the

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

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Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
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Campeau, Hon. Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
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Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
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Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
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Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
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Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Hon. Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Young, Colleen	SP	Lloydminster
Vacant		Prince Albert Carlton

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you and to all members of this legislature, Rod Donison. Rod is sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and he's the only one there with a police uniform on so he's not hard to find.

Rod Donison was commissioned a chaplain with the Regina Police Service this past Sunday. I had the honour of speaking at the event and attending with my colleague from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley who will share more information later on this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of the House to welcome Rod Donison to their legislature.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I would also like to welcome him to the legislature and thank him for his many years of service and leadership in a very important part of our Saskatchewan society. So thank you very much.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for greater support for GSAs [gender and sexuality alliance] in Saskatchewan schools. We know that this province lags behind others in securing the rights of gender- and sexually diverse students. This government's not doing enough to create safe spaces in our schools for sexually diverse students or students bullied because of their sexual identity or sexual orientation, and that gender- and sexually diverse students are four times more likely than their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide. We know this government must act so that under no circumstances are gender- and sexually diverse students denied the right to form GSAs within their schools.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on this government to take immediate and meaningful action to pass *The Respect for Diversity — Student Bill of Rights Act* and enshrine in legislation the right of Saskatchewan students to form GSAs within their schools in order to foster caring, accepting, inclusive environments and deliver equal opportunities for all students to reach their full potential.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Regina and Moose Jaw. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition from petitioners concerned with the high cost of post-secondary education in the province of Saskatchewan, and they wish to bring to the Chamber's attention the following: the fact that the average Canadian student in 2014 graduated with debt of over \$27,000, not including credit card and other private debt. In the prayer that reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

The petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to immediately increase the funding for post-secondary education in this province, with a legislated provision that this increase in funding be used to lower tuition fees.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals including from the city of Regina and Moose Jaw. I so present.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition in support of better schools. These residents of Saskatchewan wish to bring attention that there's far too many classrooms that are overcrowded, that there's been hundreds of educational assistants eliminated, the positions for those roles. Students are not getting the attention they require. Conditions of our schools are run down, and there's plans to rent schools from private corporations in an expensive and reckless fashion. So:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on this government to immediately stop ignoring schools and start prioritizing students by capping classroom sizes, increasing support for students, and developing a transparent plan to build and repair our schools.

And these petitions are signed by residents of the city of Regina.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of better seniors' care. And the individuals who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: many seniors are unable to find spaces in care facilities in their communities or with their partners or near their family; many seniors are having to wait in hospital beds due to the lack of spaces in care facilities; and that the Provincial Auditor found that many seniors' care facilities do not have high enough standards of care. I'll just read the prayer. They:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to immediately undertake

meaningful steps to improve the quality of seniors' care, including creating more spaces and more choices for seniors; ensuring higher standards of care in public facilities, private facilities, and home care; ensuring appropriate staffing levels in seniors' care facilities; restoring regulations that provide minimum standards of care; and providing more support to help seniors remain independent in their own homes for as long as they desire.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by individuals from La Ronge. I so submit.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to return to introduction of guests to introduce a school group.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognized the member for Regina Lakeview.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a group of 25 grade 7 students from Ethel Milliken elementary school in Regina. They're seated in the east gallery, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Jenaya Giblett. And they are here to see how this part of democracy works, and I know it's a great day to be here on the day of a federal election. So they've been hearing lots about politics, and I think we'll show them a little more of how it works here in Saskatchewan. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Accreditation Restored to College of Medicine

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In case you didn't listen to the news last Friday, the University of Saskatchewan medical school has come off probation. Mr. Speaker, the College of Medicine has worked hard with the committee on accreditation of Canadian medical schools to make appropriate changes to ensure they are able to meet the high standards we expect in medical education. This committee was able to see the combination of stable university leadership, more doctors teaching, and a new study and lounge space for medical students correct many of the concerns that were brought up in the 2013 review.

This government has always been proud to work as a partner with the College of Medicine. This includes our almost \$165 million investment into the College of Medicine to reach accreditation. The Health Sciences Building at the University of Saskatchewan is also a large part of this commitment, with our government providing almost \$230 million for the state-of-the-art addition to an already impressive campus.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the hard work already done by the College of Medicine and, Mr. Speaker, we are confident that the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] will continue to work hard to achieve the highest possible standards and outcomes for its students. I would ask all members to join me in thanking the leadership team at the University of Saskatchewan as well as congratulating the College of Medicine on this big step forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Anniversary of "Famous Five" Privy Council Decision

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the 86th anniversary of the legal recognition of women as persons here in Canada. For that victory, we owe a debt of gratitude to the deep convictions and tremendous perseverance of five extraordinary Alberta women: Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Edwards.

The Famous Five took their case to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled that the word "persons" in *The British North America Act* did not include women. Undaunted by the Supreme Court's decision, the Famous Five took their case a step further to the Privy Council of Great Britain, which was then Canada's highest court. On October 18th, 1929, the Privy Council ruled "that the exclusion of women from all public office is a relic of days more barbarous than ours."

Much progress has been made over the last 86 years, but there is still so much work to do to ensure equality in all areas of politics, law, and life. This is poignantly demonstrated through the current federal election. Today when people go to vote, in 97 ridings there will be no women candidates on the ballot for the three major parties, and overall only 33 per cent of ballot choices are women. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, there is still a lot of work to do.

To quote from Nellie McClung, we as women must "Never retract, never explain, never apologize — get things done and let them howl."

To all those who've struggled to advance the cause of equality and all those who continue to struggle to ensure that women have the same opportunity to participate in every sphere of society, we say thank you.

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

Dr. F.H. Wigmore Regional Hospital Opens in Moose Jaw

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you. It's a proud day for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as the new Dr. F.H. Wigmore Regional Hospital in Moose Jaw begins serving patients today.

This is a hospital like no other in the province or in the nation, as a matter of fact. Using the wisdom and experience of patients, family members, staff members, and health care providers, a multidisciplinary team developed the design of a patient- and family-centred health facility. Gone are the days of patients wandering the halls, going to multiple departments for

tests and procedures. The innovation layout developed using lean mythology allows health care teams to bring most services directly to the patient in a treatment room or a patient's private room.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to see this \$99.5 million hospital open and serving patients. All services will be operational as of Wednesday, October the 21st. Soon southern Saskatchewan's first MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] in a regional hospital will begin service, along with the continued use of the hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the grand opening ceremony on November the 6th, when the family of the late Dr. Frederick H. Wigmore will take part in the official naming of this wonderful new facility.

The generosity of the community in supporting the Moose Jaw Health Foundation's capital campaign has been tremendous, and because of local support this hospital is equipped with state of the art equipment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

World Refugee Day

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to World Refugee Day. This day is recognized by the United Nations on June 20th, and this year I was delighted to attend the occasion at the Saskatoon Open Door office.

Mr. Speaker, the Secretary-General of the UN [United Nations] states, and I quote:

Refugees are people like anyone else. Like you and me, they led ordinary lives before becoming displaced, and their biggest dream is to be able to live normally again. Let us recall our common humanity, celebrate tolerance and diversity, and open our hearts to refugees everywhere.

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees estimate that more than 4 million people have fled conflicts in Syria, and already in 2015 more than 300,000 people have made the treacherous crossing of the Mediterranean. These numbers continue to increase as more people seek refuge after fleeing their homeland to escape violence and unrest.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has set a target to bring more than 11,000 Syrian refugees, but so far only 2,000 have been successfully processed. Mr. Speaker, many Saskatchewan residents are calling on the provincial and federal governments to urgently welcome refugees. In September, rallies were held in both Regina and Saskatoon.

I want to thank the efforts of those in our province advocating for refugees. I also want to thank the Regina and Saskatoon Open Door Societies, the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association, and the Saskatoon Refugee Coalition for their tireless work. Mr. Speaker, we must continue to offer compassion and assistance to refugees in their time of need. Thank you very much.

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

Commissioning Service for Regina Police Service Chaplain

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday, October the 18th, the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Policing and I had the opportunity of attending the commissioning service for Rod Donison as chaplain for the Regina Police Service. Held at the Harvest City Church, the commissioning service highlighted Rod's new leadership role as a chaplain for Regina Police Service.

Born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan, Rod Donison is a leader in this city and in this province. Rod is an active member in the community and he is involved in numerous organizations. One of those organizations is Athletes in Action. It is through this program that Rod has served as the chaplain for the Saskatchewan Roughriders for the past two years.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, there is a spiritual kinship that connects every individual who puts on a police uniform. This connection exists because of a duty and a commitment to something larger than oneself. Rod understands this commitment and that is why we know that the Regina Police Service is in capable hands of a real Saskatchewan leader.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome all members to join me in thanking Rod for his leadership and his commitment to this province. Congratulations, Rod. We know you will do this job humbly and with dedication and with great passion. Thank you very much, Rod.

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

Education Week

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted and honoured to acknowledge Education Week in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, October 18th to 24th has been proclaimed Education Week. This year's theme, Celebrating Each Student, is meant to celebrate and recognize the hard work and success of both teachers and students across the province.

I'd like to highlight two of the many successful programs being delivered in our schools: first, Help Me Tell My Story and secondly, Saskatchewan Reads.

Mr. Speaker, Help Me Tell My Story began in 2010 by Ministry of Education staff to help improve understanding of First Nations and Métis early learners, to help set them up for future success. With the help of an engaging turtle puppet and an innovative iPad app, the program uses an interactive, comprehensive approach rooted in First Nations and Métis learning perspectives to assess oral language development for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children. Students can listen to the stories in English, Cree, Dene, and Michif.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Reads was developed by the provincial reading team in order to help achieve a province-wide goal of having 80 per cent of students reading at or above grade level by 2020. It's used to complement existing curricula for grades 1, 2, and 3, and it also provides guidance

for school divisions to build their own reading initiatives to meet the needs of their unique student population.

These two programs, Mr. Speaker, highlight the theme of this year's Education Week, Celebrating Each Student. In closing, I'd like to again thank our teachers, educational professionals and, most importantly, our students for all the hard work they put into achieving their success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Regina Teacher Receives Governor General's Award

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Kim Sadowsky who received the Governor General's History Award for excellence in teaching in recognition of her Native studies class at Thom Collegiate, a school in my constituency. She's one of six recipients this year and the only recipient from Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Kim's class focuses on key historical events in relation to the treaty process in Canada. Students gain an in-depth perspective as they take on the roles of indigenous and non-indigenous people and act out key historical events and policies.

As the course nears its end, students explore the effects of intergenerational trauma and current social issues. Students discover how the past has influenced their understanding of the present and as a result they create hopeful possibilities for the future through a final inquiry project.

Mr. Speaker, one of the student groups in this course decided to engage their school board to raise the Treaty 4 flag. Their group was successful and the flag now flies beside the Canadian flag of the school division office.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Kim on receiving this great honour and in thanking her for engaging her class in a way that drives interest and education on such an important topic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Review of Domestic Violence Deaths

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. On Thursday the government launched an awareness campaign to stop sexual violence against women and girls. Though I know there are some legitimate concerns about lack of Aboriginal representation in the campaign, I'm sure all members agree that this is definitely a step in the right direction, and I sincerely thank the government for that.

But I think that we need to go a lot further because the sad reality is, is that our province has the worst rate of murders by intimate partners. So my question is for the Premier: what is his government doing to address domestic violence deaths?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the member for this question. It is a very, very important one. The member is quite right. We have the dubious distinction in Saskatchewan in leading in this particular category in terms of murder of intimate partners. We have the distinction of leading in a number of other categories, as the member will know as well, when it comes to domestic abuse and sexual abuse or certainly assaults, Mr. Speaker.

And so the program that was launched last week is just one part of the government's effort in this regard. There is about \$11.3 million in this current budget that's aimed at initiatives across the spectrum. Mr. Speaker, this particular area where lives are lost is very, very close to people across the province and certainly, for reasons of our political family, for members on this side of the House. And so we are reaching out to the community-based organizations and stakeholders for their advice through the Ministry of Justice in terms of this particular issue but the general campaign as well, how it can be improved not only by awareness but by public policy and by resources of government.

And I'd make the same extension, the same offer to members opposite if they have some suggestions, some ideas on how Saskatchewan can do much better. Because we must do much better for women in this province, for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do offer my sincere condolences to the Premier and Sask Party members and the Sask Party family, as I know this issue has touched them in a very personal way, and I extend my sincere condolences. And we know sadly this is an issue that has touched many families throughout Saskatchewan.

We do have one of the worst . . . We do have the worst rate of murders when it comes to domestic violence here in Canada, and the sad reality is that it appears to be getting worse. Our chief coroner had this to say just a few months ago: "We have not seen this level of violence in Saskatchewan — I mean, deaths — in my history here. It is certainly a wake-up call."

Unlike other provinces, Saskatchewan has not had a coroner's inquest or a formal review of these domestic violence deaths. And I think that's something that needs to change. I want Saskatchewan to follow the lead of other provinces in formally reviewing domestic violence deaths. Is the Premier open to that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and the short answer is yes. We're certainly open to such a review. Mr. Speaker, even last session members of the House will know the government introduced amendments to the victims of domestic violence Act. Those were bills 144 and 152. They were intended to enhance the ability of the police and the justice system to offer protection to victims. But I think it is fair to say that this sort of special review of these kinds of deaths is something that could certainly help, could help inform the government's actions going forward, and we're open to it as

well, Mr. Speaker.

We also need to work harder as a group in terms of this particular room, the Legislative Assembly as a government, to ensure that there are proper transition and safe shelter resources in the province. Part of the help that's provided by government includes support for the 12 transition houses in the province today. I'm happy to inform the members that notwithstanding a tragic fire of a newly built transition house, the first in a very long time in the province's history in Melfort, the rebuilding is under way. And we're hoping very soon to have those facilities available, that help available to the people of Melfort and area with the recognition that more needs to be done.

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

Mr. Broten: — There are indeed many individual steps that need to take place through agencies, through partners in the community, through police services in order to ensure that these murders are prevented whenever possible, Mr. Speaker. We know a formal review component is something that other provinces have adopted. New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta have formal committees that review domestic violence deaths and then make formal public recommendations to prevent them in the future.

The government's very own expert in the Ministry of Justice acknowledges that it is best practice to review these murders, to learn from them, and to take action to prevent future deaths, and our chief coroner has recognized that this needs to serve as a wake-up call to us. I think we need to listen to that.

So specifically around the idea of formal review processes other provinces have followed, this is something that I believe we can't wait on, something that we can move on in short order. Would the Premier be willing to move this along in a quick way?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. And I'm happy to inform members of the House that within a matter of weeks, I think it was going to be next week, the ministers of Justice were going to be announcing such a process and such a review. And so we can certainly make that announcement here today that that is forthcoming.

I do think there are and there will be other ideas and other measures that members on both sides of the House will be able to offer up. And we really need to be canvassing all such ideas because, to be leading as we are in these areas, in these statistics, of course means that we're leading when it comes to loss of women. We're leading in murders and we're leading in violence against the people whom we represent in this Chamber. It's obviously actually much more than just a statistical report that we get on an annual basis.

Mr. Speaker, I would also take this, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for this chance and this platform, to encourage anybody that might be watching proceedings today to share that video because we do have to start with education and awareness. That video will be played in movie theatres. It's available on social media, on platforms of access to young

people. I think we all agree that young people, especially young men, boys need to see this particular video and become much more aware of this particular issue. And so I thank the member for the platform to raise the Who Will You Help program here in this House.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The willingness to have a formal review committee is indeed an important step, and I'm glad to hear that this is something that is planned. There's been a different approach in different provinces. For some it's an ongoing review, so every murder is investigated with individual recommendations. Some other provinces have taken an approach where it's a one-time review. My question to the Premier: will this review committee that has been set up, will it be a one-time review or will this be an ongoing review for, tragically, what we hope not to be more victims here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Leader of the Opposition again for the question. There are a number of options in terms of sort of the ongoing general overview for these, for murders. There is the chance for a much more specific review after each case, and hopefully there'll be no need for any. But, Mr. Speaker, in reality there will be. And I think that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Corrections and Policing are open to either.

The general initiative was to be announced in about a week. And I think there's the opportunity through consultation with yourself and your colleagues, but also CBOs [community-based organization] and others interested, we can make sure we get this particular special review right so that it serves the purpose that you've quite rightly highlighted, can actually be helpful in informing government on how we can end this completely.

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

Cost of Regina Bypass

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Highways please explain how the Regina bypass has literally skyrocketed through the roof by way of cost?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be able to answer this question. You know, the member opposite's entitled to his opinion, Mr. Speaker, but he's not entitled to make up the facts. In the fall of 2013, Mr. Speaker, the estimated cost to build this bypass was \$1.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, with the addition of an overpass at Hill Avenue and 9th Avenue, Mr. Speaker, the cost to build this bypass is \$1.2 billion today, Mr. Speaker. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

We know what the record of the opposition is when it comes to the maintenance of infrastructure in this province. This program, the development of the bypass, will also include 34

years of maintenance on a project, Mr. Speaker, so that at the end of that time, when the maintenance of the project becomes the responsibility of the government, Mr. Speaker, this project will be as if it was new. So, Mr. Speaker, those are the facts. I'm waiting for the next question so we can continue to set the record straight.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the story just keeps changing with this government on this front. Of course the bypass was originally estimated by that government at \$400 million, then it went to \$800 million, then \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. Now \$2 billion, and it doesn't even include the land costs. That's five times more than the original plan of that government, Mr. Speaker.

Now in a one-hour tech briefing several days ago, I had a lot of questions and, you know, the Minister of Highways' answers just weren't there. There was no adequate answers, Mr. Speaker. All I was told, and we hear it today, is that two overpasses were added at about \$30 million apiece, and the rest of the cost increases are largely a result of the P3 [public-private partnership] rent-a-road scheme with this conglomerate from France.

Saskatchewan people deserve way more transparency and way better answers than that. So again this time, can the Highways minister please explain to Saskatchewan people why the bypass costs have skyrocketed to \$2 billion, not even including the land costs?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I just get to continue to correct the record that the opposition continues to put, continues to try to mislead the public with respect to this project, Mr. Speaker. This is a publicly owned facility, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've said that the project costs will be \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. Those are the costs. Those are the costs of building this project.

[14:00]

The original estimates, certainly the project has grown in scope from the original estimates, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the safety of the public. Mr. Speaker, we're talking about economic development. I'm not sure what costs they would put on building this bypass, Mr. Speaker, but we're very comfortable with \$1.2 billion. The difference, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the transfer of risk. Mr. Speaker, it has to do with ensuring that this project is maintained for the period of time under the contract. So I'm really not sure what the member doesn't get.

We have offered that member a technical briefing, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Swift Current long-term care facility. He has refused and neglected to take a technical briefing from us so that he understands the process. At least he has the obligation, Mr. Speaker, of understanding what P3s are all about before he stands and asks these questions in the House.

The Speaker: — I'd just like to caution members on both sides to choose their words with care. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, of course from the minister and that government that's unwilling to have an independent audit of this actual deal before taxpayers are put on the hook. You would think that, if they had nothing to hide, they'd have no trouble having an independent audit, something that government voted against and something that government won't allow. And Saskatchewan people deserve better answers than tired spin on that. They deserve transparency especially on such a massive project.

When a project goes from \$400 million to over \$2 billion in just a couple of years, clearly something isn't right. Saskatchewan people have a right to know the breakdown of costs, how much construction will be, how much the ongoing maintenance costs will be, where all the money is going. And why it makes one ounce of sense to have provincially owned snowplows and mowers stop plowing and mowing once they reach the bypass so that a French conglomerate can make a profit off of it is beyond me, Mr. Speaker. What's the minister's answers to these questions?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There was talk about transparency, and we'll talk about accountability. The Saskatchewan auditor, Mr. Speaker, has said we have effective processes for evaluating P3s, Mr. Speaker. And in terms of transparency, Mr. Speaker, there'll be a fairness opinion, Mr. Speaker, a conflict of interest opinion. The value for money in the contract documents are all made public, Mr. Speaker. So when the auditor has an opportunity to look at our processes and say that they're effective in determining valuing risk, Mr. Speaker, valuing all the elements that go into the contract, we take that at face value, Mr. Speaker. And we'll take the opinion of the auditor any time over the opinion of that member.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that they voted against any independent audit in advance of this government signing taxpayers on to deal with this Paris snowplow company. With costs skyrocketing so badly and with so little transparency from this government, it's clear that Saskatchewan people aren't getting a good deal.

Now while government should be separating out and building as urgently as possible the needed overpasses on Highway No. 1 East, clearly the other aspects of this project should be evaluated. We need to get the safest route possible, the most efficient route possible at the most affordable cost, and assure some actual accountability and transparency to the public. With the Sask Party, we're clearly not getting that. And it's shaping up to be a multi-billion-dollar bypass boondoggle, one that will put taxpayers on the hook and they'll be paying through the nose for generations, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: why is the Sask Party being so reckless on this front?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and

Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've heard the plan from the opposition, and we know that their plan with respect to the bypass would cost \$1 billion more and be delayed by over four years, Mr. Speaker. We're going to have this project built faster. We're going to have it built on time and on budget, Mr. Speaker, and sooner than it could be built using a traditional method, Mr. Speaker. We're building it because of safety. We're building it because of economic development, Mr. Speaker, something that that member and those people didn't have to worry about when they were in government.

Mr. Speaker, this is an integrated project. To simply build it . . . This is an integrated project, Mr. Speaker. To build it piecemeal doesn't serve the ends of the people that use that roadway and it certainly doesn't serve the ends of the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. So this road will be built on time. It will be built on budget. It will save lives and it will enhance the economic opportunities that people have in this province, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're doing it, and we stand by our numbers.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Review of Firefighting Efforts

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, there's still a lot of anger about the way the Sask Party government has handled the forest fire season, about the deep cuts to firefighting resources, about the policies that are too rigid, and about the lack of co-operation with First Nation northern leaders and about poor communication. Will the Premier admit that these are areas where his government's response was very poor?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize the extraordinary work that was done by both officials in various ministries across government and also outside agencies such as the Red Cross who did just a commendable amount of work under very difficult circumstances this past summer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I should also note that today there was a news release that government is about to conduct and is in the middle of conducting a review of how we handled the wildfire situation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, I think a very commendable job was done. We should point out that no lives were lost. Minimal amounts of property were lost, Mr. Speaker.

But having said that, I think we should always bear in mind in a situation like this, which had large-scale evacuations unlike anything ever seen in this province before, Mr. Speaker, in excess of 13,000 people evacuated from their homes, we always need to take a step back, do a review, and decide whether or not we can do a better job in the future, Mr. Speaker. That's what this review is all about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — This is the Premier that chose to repeatedly

drive past Montreal Lake Cree Nation and didn't even bother to call Chief Henderson until it was publicly . . . until he was publicly pressured to do so, even though Montreal Lake community members lost many homes to the fire. That is poor leadership. This is the government that refused to co-operate with First Nations that wanted to set up evacuation centres. That too is poor leadership.

Why did the Premier refuse to work co-operatively with First Nation leaders and communities during the forest fires?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Government Relations, First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, what utter nonsense. I travelled to many communities across northern Saskatchewan, along with a number of other colleagues, including the Premier, Mr. Speaker. We met with leaders across the North. What the member's doing opposite is just simply playing politics, as he did through the entire event.

Mr. Speaker, that does a disservice to the firefighters who worked very hard. That does a disservice to the northern leaders, to the First Nations leaders, to the municipal leaders. Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous. That member has done nothing but play politics from the start with this.

Mr. Speaker, for example, on social media in the middle of the fire season, that member's on social media supposedly helping behind the scenes with manning firehoses, Mr. Speaker. He's standing there in his Florsheims and his Tommy Bahama shirt — not outfitted appropriately, Mr. Speaker, doing nothing but playing politics. Mr. Speaker, I hope he asks another question because I'd like to follow up.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — We called for a full, independent review to ensure that the appropriate lessons are learned from this experience and to deliver a much better approach to forest fires in the future. The Sask Party refused to do that. Instead they are just doing their own review with an online form. To the Premier: why does he not want a proper, independent review? What is he so afraid of?

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, as was announced today, there is going to be a thorough review done. The internal part of the review amongst the individual ministries has already started. Mr. Speaker, we're going to have officials from the various effected ministries, from the Ministry of Government Relations, from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of the Environment. We're going to have a facilitator from the Ministry of Justice to help us with that.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to give anybody in this province an opportunity to do a submission online or written. Mr. Speaker, we're going to hear from everybody and we're going to be very transparent with it.

Mr. Speaker, we've been very transparent with this from the

start. The Premier ensured that regular updates were given to the Leader of the Opposition's office on this as the event ensued, Mr. Speaker, but the members opposite right from the start insisted on playing politics with this, something this side would have never done. Mr. Speaker, there's certain things that go beyond partisan politics, and the fact that when there's people and property at risk, that's certainly one of them.

Mr. Speaker, what that member's doing is absolutely deplorable. He should sit tight, wait for the review, and see what it comes up with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Climate Change and Environmental Protection

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, when the new Environment minister was asked if he believes climate change is real, he couldn't answer the question. When pushed repeatedly, he said, "Those are the kinds of things that I want to talk to my officials about and find out where we're at as far as the science goes."

Has the Environment minister been briefed of yet on the science of climate change, and is he finally willing to admit that it's real?

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

Hon. Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to stand today and talk about what this government is doing in order to balance our economic growth in this province and as well as maintain our environmental protection.

In recent years, we've seen unprecedented economic growth in this province as well as great population growth. But, Mr. Speaker, we're also a national leader in job creation, in exports. We supply the nation with a lot of things that's required. But I'm also happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that during that period of time, we've seen a 24 per cent increase in our GDP [gross domestic product]. We have also seen a 12 per cent decrease in our greenhouse gas intensity.

Mr. Speaker, our GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions are down per capita by 4.55 tonnes per capita in this province since 2013 to 2007. From 2007-12, we have established that our greenhouse gas emissions during a period of, you know, enormous growth, have stabilized. And we will continue to work towards doing that.

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

Ms. Sproule: — I guess, Mr. Speaker, he's still being briefed by his staff on the question of whether or not climate change is real. In fact this party has a candidate in Saskatoon who says that climate change is a myth based on "witchcraft reasoning." Neither the Premier nor the Environment minister have denounced those comments. That's how out of touch and backward the Sask Party really is. No wonder they have slashed climate change funding by 85 per cent. To the minister: when can we expect the Sask Party to get serious about climate change?

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

Hon. Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government and this environment is certainly serious about climate change. And I think what we're concentrating on, Mr. Speaker, is the effect that man's efforts, man's activities may have on that climate change. And that's why Saskatchewan has developed a program where we are investing in innovation and technology in this province.

Since 2007, Mr. Speaker, there's been \$5 billion invested in private, provincial, and federal investment in carbon technologies. Twenty-five per cent of SaskPower's energy is now produced from renewables, and that's very important.

We are a leader in innovation and technology in this province, in this country. And not only here in Saskatchewan are we recognized for that, Mr. Speaker, but right across the world. We're respected for what we're doing in Boundary dam 3 with our carbon capture, reducing 90 per cent of the CO₂ that's going into the atmosphere. That plant is now working at four times cleaner than what a natural gas plant would and 10 times cleaner than what it was on conventional coal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 184 — *The Automobile Accident Insurance (Motorcycles) Amendment Act, 2015*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 184, *The Automobile Accident Insurance (Motorcycles) Amendment Act, 2015* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved first reading of Bill No. 184, *The Automobile Accident Insurance (Motorcycles) Amendment Act, 2015*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 185 — *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous Measures) Amendment Act, 2015*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 185, *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous Measures) Amendment*

Act, 2015 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Premier that the first reading of Bill No. 185, *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous Measures) Amendment Act, 2015* be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

The Speaker: — When shall it be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 186 — *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2015*

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 186, *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2015* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister for Government Relations has moved that Bill No. 186, *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2015* be read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McCall: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Please state your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period the exchange with the Minister for SaskBuilds, he used the expression “continues to try to mislead.” Mr. Speaker, that clearly speaks to intent and has been repeatedly ruled unparliamentary. I’d ask you to rule on that use of that language by that minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To respond to the point of order, certainly I heard the comments as well. I think it’s very important that we examine the context in which it was said. But certainly I know . . . I also heard Mr. Speaker ask both members of the exchange to be very careful in their comments, and I feel that that has dealt with it adequately. Thank you.

The Speaker: — As I as well heard the comment by the minister — I was listening carefully — and intent is one of the criteria. But the words are generally associated with deliberately mislead, and that was not the case here. Therefore your point of order is not well taken.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 183 — *The Saskatchewan Employment (Essential Services) Amendment Act, 2015*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise in the House today to speak on Bill No. 183, *The Saskatchewan Employment (Essential Services) Amendment Act, 2015* which amends part VII of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* covering essential services.

In January of this year, the Supreme Court of Canada brought down a precedent-setting decision on essential services that will likely have an impact on all jurisdictions in Canada. Following that decision, we took the time we needed to analyze the decision and consider how it may affect our current essential services legislation and the amendments that we made in Bill 128 which was passed last year, but not proclaimed.

We committed to working with public sector employers and the unions that represent their workers to find common ground so that our legislation not only addresses constitutional obligations, but also ensures the provisions of essential services for Saskatchewan people.

In May of 2015, consultations commenced on how to address the Supreme Court’s decision. Over 135 public sector employers and unions were asked to provide feedback on a new process for ensuring essential services while allowing employees to take job action. These consultations concluded on September 30th, 2015.

These amendments will enable Saskatchewan essential services legislation to address the concerns of the Supreme Court decision which recognized that essential services must be maintained while respecting workers’ right to take job action.

I want to use this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank each individual and organization in the province who took the time to provide feedback on this pivotal piece of legislation. Consultations played an integral role in the development of the new essential services legislation by involving stakeholders in the process. These amendments are largely based on the effort

of a working group comprised of public sector employers, the unions that represent their workers, and government representatives working co-operatively to develop a new essential services process that will meet the needs of the Saskatchewan public.

I want to personally thank each of the members of the working group. They are Hugh Wagner of the Grain Services Union; Jim Holmes, Canadian Union of Public Employees; Ronni Nordal, Saskatchewan Union of Nurses; Doug Forseth, Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations; Susan Amrud, Q.C. [Queen's Counsel], Ministry of Justice; and Pat Parenteau, Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. These individuals worked hard to develop this innovative new process and are responsible for getting us where we are today. I can't thank them enough.

I also want to thank SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] president, Larry Hubich. He was instrumental in putting this group together and providing valuable feedback. I know that we don't always see eye to eye, but I want to thank him for helping to accomplish something that I believe will work for all of the citizens of the province.

After the working group initially developed proposed changes to the legislation, the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety undertook consultations with affected stakeholders. We received 17 submissions and met with 19 stakeholders across the province.

The key changes in the proposed legislation are, first, removing the definition of essential services. The parties will now determine what services are essential for their respective organization. Secondly, establish an essential services tribunal, which is an independent third party dispute resolution body that will render decisions on what are essential services, as well as whether an essential services agreement substantially interferes in the exercise of a strike or lockout. The tribunal will be comprised of the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Labour Relations Board and a representative appointed by each of the parties.

Next, providing for binding mediation-arbitration to conclude the terms and conditions of the collective agreement when an essential services agreement is found to substantially interfere in the exercise of a strike or lockout. The mediation-arbitration will be conducted by a three-person panel unless the parties agree to a single mediator-arbitrator, requiring the parties to include in the notice of impasse whether there are essential services to be maintained in the strike or lockout. Also, changing the cooling-off period from 14 days to 7 days in cases where essential services are identified by the parties.

Next, establishing a maximum time period of 60 days for a mandatory mediation conciliation under section 6-33, except where the parties mutually agree to a different time period.

The new essential services legislation meets the constitutional requirements set out by the Supreme Court while ensuring essential services are maintained for Saskatchewan people. It will ensure that Saskatchewan continues to be an innovative and economic leader in Canada while ensuring that the rights of workers are maintained.

There is also one other small piece to this amendment and it has to do with occupational health and safety. It is an amendment to adopt the national standard for a workplace hazardous materials information system. This is something that every jurisdiction in Canada has done or is in the process of doing. This will mean that the same labelling and training requirements for transporting and handling of hazardous materials will exist in each province and eliminate the requirement to relabel products when chemicals are moved between jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to move second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 183, *The Saskatchewan Employment (Essential Services) Amendment Act, 2015*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And indeed it's my honour to be able to rise today to speak to the second reading of this particular bill. It's certainly a bill that has a long and colourful history and one I think that will go down in the history books in Saskatchewan for a number of reasons, and some of which are particularly concerning, Mr. Speaker.

Just to review a little bit about how we got to where we are today, we know that this bill was introduced I believe in December of 2007, 19th of December, 2007, proclaimed in law May 14th, 2008. So anyone who's following Saskatchewan politics at all would know that that's right away when this Sask Party government first took over in government in 2008 and 2007.

So it was obvious that this is something that's very important to the Sask Party, and I think it's very clear on all accounts that there was absolutely no consultation done with the people it was going to affect the most. And certainly that's been a source of a lot of the problem that the Sask Party has found itself in and certainly I think a main reason for the horrific costs that have been dumped on the taxpayers because of the Sask Party's stubborn approach to essential services legislation and basically getting it wrong and having to go through a lot of motions to finally get to this point today where they are trying to fix some of those previous actions.

One of the first issues that arises in my mind, Mr. Speaker, and that is, what did this actually cost the taxpayer? And we don't have any numbers from the government and certainly we're still looking for what the total costs would be, but I think there's a lot of things that need to be factored in here. First of all, what did this government spend on getting this bill drafted? Did they hire outside counsel? Definitely outside counsel are not cheap and I think there'd be a very large, hefty bill just getting the bill drafted in the first place on their instructions. And obviously, given what we know now, it was a faulty bill right from the get-go. But we know that professionals were hired to draft it, and so what was the cost associated with that?

What were the costs associated with the amount of time public servants spent implementing their government's direction at the direction of the government? There'd be a number of officials within two ministries for sure, Labour and Justice, who would have spent a considerable amount of time working on these

files. And I know, Mr. Speaker, when I actually worked for the federal Department of Justice, we had to predict the amount of time we were going to spend on particular files as part of our planning and budget planning for a go-forward basis for the future. And so I'm pretty sure the Minister of Justice would have access to those types of numbers, and we would like to know that. I think if the government's going to be really transparent here, we need to know how much this mistake has cost Saskatchewan taxpayers. So obviously there'd be other staff involved. There'd be staff from the Executive Council, all the communications time that has gone into defending this faulty bill.

And then that's not even talking yet about the court costs and all the effort that went into defending this bill all the way through several levels of court when at any point in time the Sask Party government could have said, you know what? We made a mistake. They're familiar with saying that. We know that, Mr. Speaker. But in this case it took, sadly, the Supreme Court of Canada to tell them that they had to admit they made a mistake.

So if you look at even the ILO [International Labour Organization] defence that was presented, like that's the International Labour Organization case that went . . . I believe the decision came in March of 2010. The complaint was in June of 2008. So this is two years right there of a number of people involved. We'd have lawyers. We'd have policy experts. We'd have policy analysts. We'd have communications people. We'd have governmental staff. We'd have ministerial staff. There was people who put a lot of time and energy on the taxpayers' dime to defending this flawed bill. And so that's a lot of money that really the public deserves an accounting for that to begin with.

[14:30]

Secondly of course, we have our own internal court system where this went through the trial at the Court of Queen's Bench. It went through the Court of Appeal here in Saskatchewan, and ultimately the SFL was forced to take it forward to the Supreme Court of Canada.

So it's not just the costs of the government staff, the government time, the experts and third party consultants that the government would have engaged to advise them — all of those have to be factored in — but also the amount of time that was taken up on the part of labour supporters and people who support workers' rights here in Saskatchewan. I mean that cost alone . . . We know that the Supreme Court awarded costs against the government for the actual court case itself, but there's no way that would take into account all the energy and effort that went on in various levels through various labour organizations in Saskatchewan and people who support workers' rights and the amount of money it took just to raise a defence to this.

It's alarming and it's a concern, and I think this is something that it's maybe a story that will never be told. We might not hear the tail end of where this really went wrong and how it was that the government was wrong on so many levels and yet stubbornly insisted on fighting this to the bitter end.

I know there's . . . I will be sharing later with you some of the

comments from some of the unions and the people who fought really hard to get this struck down, but certainly the amount of time that they put into it was considerable.

I think the one quote I wanted to share at this point in time was from Bob Bymoen who is the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] president. And in his press release last week, October 15th, from the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union, he says the following: "The government had to be forced by the Supreme Court of Canada to treat workers fairly." He goes on to say in the quote, "Working families lost the ability to engage in meaningful collective bargaining as a result of the now illegal public service essential services Act."

And then he went on to say in the next quote, "Tremendous effort and resources had to be marshalled by unions to counter this attack on public service workers. No group of citizens should be forced to go to such lengths to protect their basic constitutional rights." And I'll end the quote there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I mean it's really a shame when you have not just outside forces attacking people's constitutional rights but the government itself. And when we have hard-working people who are just trying to do their job, and then they have to all of a sudden rally, marshal their forces together to actually defend an attack on their constitutional rights which is forced all the way to the Supreme Court, I think there's a lot of reasons for concern in this government's approach and the amount of costs, the amount of time, and the amount of hardship it's caused for a lot of people.

So I think that's the first layer of this particular debate that we're embarking in today after . . . when this was introduced, December . . . What did I say? December 19th I believe of 2007. So we're coming up pretty much eight years total now on this ill-advised, illogical, and ideological attack on working people that we saw introduced by this government.

It's ironic though, Mr. Speaker, because in the end I think working people of Canada owe the Sask Party government a tremendous debt of gratitude. And that's because, because of the way they handled this case, we now have it confirmed at the highest level of court in Canada that there is a constitutional right to strike under our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And that is probably the single most important decision on labour law that has come out of the court probably in decades. It's radically changed I think the approach of many governments.

Now I'm not sure if their Conservative counterparts would be thankful for this change, but I think working people across Canada are certainly going to benefit from the stubbornness of the Sask Party government in pushing this item forward through the courts. And now we finally have confirmation from the highest level of the law in Canada that confirms that indeed the freedom of association that's found in section 4 of the Charter also includes the freedom or the right to strike as an organized unit. So I think that's probably the silver lining in all of this, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that it cost so much for Saskatchewan taxpayers. And I think also the time and probably the effect it would have had on workers who are passionate about these types of rights, there would have been a lot of

dismay and alarm.

I remember, certainly remember the furor when the bill was introduced. And I wasn't sitting in the Assembly at that time, but it did have a serious impact across the labour movement in Saskatchewan. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, that's an important part of who we are as Saskatchewan people. And I mean, they're the backbone of our industries, and they certainly have a lot invested in ensuring that their rights are protected. And I think it benefits everyone. It benefits our middle class. It benefits our families. It benefits our children. And it certainly benefits the taxes that we're able to raise through the workers in Saskatchewan because they are actually doing the work and participating in the democracy.

So in that sense, although it was a long and expensive struggle, I think the end result is one that's actually advanced labour law in Canada, not just in Saskatchewan. So there is a silver lining here to this rather dark cloud that the Sask Party has pulled us through in the last eight years . . . seven years.

The other thing that I want to touch a little bit on, and I will be talking about the actual changes within the legislation itself, but we know that there's been a few changes also in terms of occupational health and safety in the details, which I will get involved in a little bit later. But I just want to talk generally about this government's approach to occupational health and safety. And we know that in Saskatchewan, our workforce has definitely increased in the last few years, from 300,000 to 400,000. There's a lot more people working out there. And so we know there's a lot more people that are being put at risk in terms of safety and that we would expect, in that kind of circumstance, that the people in charge of occupational health and safety would be given the tools they need to actually ensure that these extra workers that are here are being protected and the ones that were here to begin with are still being protected.

So back in, I think it was March of 2015, we had a story come from CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news about the changes to OH & S [occupational health and safety] that a former officer said is putting workers at risk. And what he said is that Saskatchewan workers could be at risk because the Sask Party government has virtually halted random inspections and dramatically scaled back enforcement. So in a time when we have more people doing dangerous work in Saskatchewan, we have a government that is halting random inspections almost entirely and then dramatically scaling back the actual enforcement of our occupational health and safety laws.

And I know one young gentleman that I know actually left the province. He was working for occupational health and safety and was so frustrated at his inability to do what he thought was his job. It was really disturbing to him, and he actually just quit his job and got a job in British Columbia because it was so frustrating for him. He just didn't feel like he could actually do his job. And part of that was because of the halting of the random inspections and then scaling back of the enforcement. He was a good guy, and I'm sorry we lost him. But you know, I understand why he had to make that decision. I certainly respect it.

The report that came out in March said that for the 12 years that this gentleman was working at occupational health and safety,

they would on average write out about 600 notices of contravention per month. But since 2013, with the major policy change, they are only writing 33 such notices a month, when averaged over the past year.

Now that's got to give you cause for alarm, Mr. Speaker. When we know that in the professional opinion of occupational health and safety officers there were on average 600 violations per month based on the work they were doing, to reduce it to 33 per month simply because of a policy change really is something that I think workers in this province need to be alarmed about, and employers and families and everyone that's affected by health and safety in the workplace. Basically the math, if you want to figure it out, it's 94 per cent fewer notices. These are just notices of contravention that were being issued.

And this gentleman said he thought that it's disgusting, and that's the word he used, in terms of the dramatic change in occupational health and safety inspections. He says he's, because of the changes, he spent most of his time in his office rather than inspecting oil rigs and construction sites as he had done for years. And I think he just felt like he wasn't able to do his job.

So there's no surprise in anything I'm saying here right now. This came out in March of this year. But I think the story we see is it goes further than that. The story is described in the article quite thoroughly from March 4th on CBC news.

But there was another gentleman who also spoke to the reporter at the time and what he talked about . . . He's a Saskatchewan safety consultant and he's gone around the province for more than a decade teaching safety in the province. He's noticed a growing number of safety violations. And what he said, Mr. Speaker, and this is a quote. He said:

I think that if I was to take you for a drive through a construction area in Saskatoon today you would see between 400 and 500 violations. And is it going to get better? Are the roofers all wearing their fall protection? No. Who's going to catch them? The ground. The ground is going to catch them.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's concerning that we know the violations are out there. We know that occupational health and safety officers have been told to sit at their desks rather than conduct these inspections. And this fellow actually says, rather than going the way, the direction this government is going, they should restore the random inspections and increase enforcement before the death toll rises.

And he would say the government should go even further and start issuing stiff fines to workers and their employers. He said they've, and this is a quote: "They've tried the carrot and the stick without a stick for the last 75 years. Maybe it's time to hit somebody with a stick." Now that's putting it quite bluntly, Mr. Speaker. But I think when we know that that number of violations are occurring, why even bother having the regulations in place if you're not going to inspect and if you're not going to enforce? It's a sham. And I think that's what we're seeing happening right now.

So within that framework where we see significant policy

changes on the part of this government to reduce the number of inspections, to take away the random inspections, and only go in when there's a complaint or a concern that's been raised, that's again just like putting the fox in charge of the chicken house. And it's not fair, I don't think, to the workers. It's not fair to the employers because there needs to be that kind of oversight. And that's the role of a strong and healthy occupational health and safety section in the Department of Labour.

One of the things that the gentleman said is . . . It was Mr. Bowers. He said, without inspectors visible in the field, safety compliance is going to plummet. And he said:

People comply because they see you driving around, same as police. You're not going to rob a bank on Broadway Avenue if police are driving up there two or three times a day.

And I think that's just . . . We've talked about it in other contexts with liquor laws, and we've talked about it in terms of speeding laws. And I mean — and this is the same thing — people need to be encouraged to comply, and enforcement is certainly a very useful way of encouraging people to comply. But when you have results-based approach, this is something that goes by the wayside. So it's concerning for sure.

Now that's the context we're talking about. We have a serious reduction in the number of inspections. We have a clawback on the number of random inspections. And so we now have a workforce that's gone up 25 per cent in the last few years, fewer officers doing the work. We don't know whether even vacancies are being filled. And that's certainly a question that should be asked is, are these positions even being filled as they become vacant in the occupational health and safety realm?

And what we have to put this, juxtapose this beside now is what's happening at the workmen's compensation board, because what we've seen is that they now have a surplus. There's I think somewhere around \$140 million in surplus right now with the workmen's compensation board.

So what would a prudent and practical government do? Well you'd think they would take a look at that surplus and say, where's the best place that we could apply it? Oh geez, we're really short on our occupational health and safety. Perhaps we should try and make sure that we have the best occupational health and safety regime in Canada. We have this extra money. It could be used. It could be applied and put to good work. We could be innovative. It could be state of the art. And we have a committee of review that I believe is sitting down today that could actually review what could be a good use for that surplus that has come about with workmen's compensation board, keeping in mind that that board is in place for injuries that workers suffer. So that's what the workmen's compensation board is all about.

[14:45]

How could we put that money to good use? Well that's not what this government has done, Mr. Speaker. Instead they think, oh I guess we should just give those employers that money back because we like them. Yes, I think we all like

employers. There's no problem there. But that \$80 million was paid in good faith, and it could be used to actually improve what's going on. But instead it's just being refunded without any further thought, without any regard for what the committee of review might be saying. Maybe the committee of review would come up with a good plan for that extra. Even, even we know right now the occupational health and safety budget is \$9 million. They have \$140 million surplus. You could double the occupational health and safety budget, ramp up inspections, ensure that there's enforcement, that fines are being issued when appropriate. That would get it up to 18 to \$20 million. You would still have \$130 million surplus in the workmen's compensation board.

So you've got to ask, why is this money going where it's going when the committee of review hasn't even done its work yet? And that's really disappointing, Mr. Speaker. Again I think it's an opportunity that has presented itself to this government, and they have just turned their back. They've squandered it, and they're just refunding it without any further thought in terms of how to make it better, how to improve the situation, rather than have people leave the province because they don't feel they can do their job as an occupational health and safety inspector.

We know they're spending lots of money on bad TV ads, Mr. Speaker. That's one place they could have maybe considered having the committee review take a look, because certainly we don't need to see any of that on television, and the waste of money that goes in there is a little bit concerning. But you know, if you're coming from an ideological place like this government has, when we see what's happened with the workers' right-to-strike law, then I guess it kind of explains itself, doesn't it?

Just a couple comments on the minister's opening remarks today, and I certainly appreciate that he took the time to share them with us before he made his comments. There's one point he made that I found the irony is overwhelming, and I can't believe that he is boasting about the consultation that they had with the workers on this particular bill because, if you put it in context, if they had consulted in the first place, then none of this would have happened. And I just find it really rich that he's kind of boasting about how the consultations happened in 2015 when we know in hindsight that it's only because this government refused to consult.

They introduced the bill shortly after they got elected and even the ILO criticizes government for its failure to consult with the people that are affected by the bill. So for him to sort of outline how wonderful the consultation process was in 2015, I think really speaks volumes to the blinders that this minister has put on in terms of how we got to this situation in the first place.

You know, he says: we're committed to working with public sector employees in the unions that represent their workers to find common ground. So why is he saying that now? And why wasn't the government saying that in 2008? It's almost shocking that he says this with such ease at this point in the proceedings.

We know why the government went back to the drawing board here. It's because they had to, because at every level they were being told that they were wrong and they needed to fix it. This

isn't about making apologies and, in fact, there is no apology in this at all for all the hassle and the pain and the suffering that this government put the workers through to protect their own constitutional rights. There's no apology in here at all. There's just back-patting about how wonderful the consultation process was in 2015.

He said the amendments will enable Saskatchewan's essential services legislation to address the concerns of the Supreme Court decision which recognized that essential services must be maintained while respecting workers' rights to take job action. And he's absolutely right there, Mr. Speaker. It's never been not that way. But it was the bill that they introduced that actually challenged that and brought us to where we are now and why we're looking at this bill.

He did actually take time to thank people who took the time this time around to provide information and discussion. And I think the net result, and we see that from the commentary from various people affected, is that people are cautiously optimistic about this bill. Obviously there's still some work to be done in terms of actual definitions of essential services, but at least it's not locked into the legislation it was the first time around.

He said he credits the people that were working on this in 2015, that it was an effort of a working group, that the representatives worked co-operatively together. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what was needed in order to get to the right place. And sadly again, it took this government seven years to sort of figure that out. And plus . . . Not just on their own, of course. They had to be encouraged by various levels of . . . well the International Labour Organization for one and the Supreme Court of Canada for another one.

So I wonder what sort of blinders the minister has put on when he thinks that this co-operative effort has just been, you know, the best thing, when we know the whole history that forced the government into this situation to properly sit down with the labour groups and find something that makes sense and that isn't against the rights that these workers have, the constitutional rights that they have.

So one of the things he's highlighted as a key change in this proposed legislation is removing the definition of essential services. So that's now taken out of the bill and it will be determined on a case-by-case basis, if I understand this correctly, in negotiation with the parties. So he said the parties will determine what services are essential for their respective organizations. So that's something, Mr. Speaker, that we're certainly going to want to keep a close eye on. We will certainly want to consult and hear concerns as these definitions start coming in, in relation to the particular organizations. So we're going to look carefully at that.

The second piece, he said, the key change is the establishment of an essential services tribunal which is thankfully an independent third party. So this party, this third party will essentially act as a . . . well a tribunal where the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Labour Relations Board will sit as the Chair of this tribunal, and then a representative from each party will then have an opportunity for mediation-arbitration. And also there will be provisions to help establish this tribunal and make sure that it's there as an independent third party. So that's a

good piece, we think, and so we'll be looking for more. You know, as we go through the debate in the next few weeks, we're going to take a close look at that and ensure that it is actually doing what the minister says it will do.

Another thing he indicated that will be happening is there will be a provision of binding mediation and arbitration to conclude terms and conditions of collective agreements when an essential services agreement is found to substantially interfere in the exercise of a strike or lockout, and that again will be a three-person panel.

I think one thing that I've heard SFL representatives for sure and other people involved in the movement over the last few years is that there has never been an effort on the part of unions to put people in danger, and there's no example of that ever happening. So sometimes I have wondered if this isn't a bogeyman that didn't exist at all and it was just some sort of rhetoric that caught the imagination of the government where they decided that this was something that had to be smacked down or something. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker. Because if I understand it correctly, services have been provided that are essential, and there has never been a denial of that in any strike action in the history of this province. So, you know, maybe I need to find out if that's exactly the case or not, but I think that it's been represented to be that way and I don't see why that isn't acceptable.

There is a number of other smaller changes that the minister highlighted that will be included in the bill or that are included in the bill. One thing he said is that this new bill meets the constitutional requirements set out by the Supreme Court while ensuring essential services are maintained for Saskatchewan people. Again I don't think that ever wasn't happening in Saskatchewan, so I'm not really sure what the concern was to begin with. Perhaps a desire to come out swinging when you form government. It's not really clear to me what motivated this in the first place.

But at least now we have, thankfully, a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada that recognizes the right to strike as a constitutionally and protected right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And that is something I think that is the legacy of this ill-advised decision. But it's certainly a good piece to have for future labour negotiations and for people when they're exercising their constitutional rights.

People don't take the decision to strike lightly. It's one that I think is the last resort, and certainly people are loath to engage in that kind of action because it does have a negative effect. It's not fun. And so it's important for unions to be able to engage in that, but only when necessary, and that's the way the law has evolved over the years. And I think this recognition by the Supreme Court of Canada to enshrine and clarify that that right does exist and is part of the right of assembly, that is established in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The minister also mentioned the little bit on occupational health and safety, and I will get into that in a minute, Mr. Speaker. So some of the more picayune aspects of the bill, I'll talk in a few minutes.

I just wanted to highlight, I guess, in terms of where we are in

the legislative cycle. I did really expect when I got up to speak first off in this fall session that I would actually be speaking to a Throne Speech, but sadly that isn't going to be the case. We're not looking forward; we're looking backwards. And I think that's something we've done a lot of in the last four years when you look at the way this government has charged ahead on something, realized they had a mistake, so they have to go back and fix it.

Some of the things that come to mind is, for example, the school year, Mr. Speaker. This government came out and they were going to fix the school year and they were going to have a fixed date and everything was going to be great, and then didn't bother to check where Labour Day actually falls in the calendar, and then had to pass a bill to fix that oversight when they pushed the legislation through.

I believe when ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] was privatized, we also saw another bill where certain parts of *The Land Titles Act* weren't caught the first time around when they charged through and passed the ISC bill. So we had another bill come through that was to fix those things that were overlooked.

I think people recall the gaming regs flip-flop; to strip or not to strip is the question. And we saw this, and we're still not really sure where that's all shaking down, but that's another example of this government flip-flopping back and forth with liquor and gaming rules on stripping clubs.

MRIs, we know that before '07 when this government, before they became government, they promised not to privatize MRIs. But we have again a bill that contradicts what this government said before.

Farm lands, farm lands . . . Pension's ability to purchase farm land. We've known all along there's a loophole in the Act. And this government chose not to act in a timely fashion and Assiniboia Farmland was able to capitalize on that and make a pretty good deal with the investment board of the Canada Pension Plan. They had every opportunity to act in a timely fashion and chose not to, and now we're going to see legislation tomorrow. Apparently it's on the order paper to fix that problem, but by the time they got around to it, Assiniboia Farmland and the investment board had made the deal. And there was certainly enough time to prohibit it before, but no, didn't get their act together, and now the bill's coming now. Well we'll see what it is tomorrow. We'll see what's in there.

Gender identity and Human Rights Code, the government will say, oh no, oh no we can't put that in there. We can't put that in there as a prescribed ground. And then when it became clear that they were being stubborn for no reason, then they made the decision, okay, well I guess, you know, we'll agree to put it in there. Because it should be there.

Buy-local day, God knows what's happened to that. We saw this government flip and flop on that one in terms of whether or not they supported a bill on establishing a buy-local day, and God knows where that's at right now. I guess we'll find out what the government's intention is there soon enough.

Procurement, are we going to include local knowledge as part

of the lists of requirements for procurement? Again we're not exactly sure where this government is at on that, but hopefully we'll see some sort of legislation to fix that, or regulations at least.

GSAs, there's a clear example, Mr. Speaker, of a stubborn refusal to do what is important and right to help children not be bullied, to ensure that they have the protection they need so that we don't see some of the terrible stories that we've seen in the past that have impacted gay and lesbian youth. And I think that's really important. And I hope, I really hope that we don't have to go to the Supreme Court of Canada on this one, Mr. Speaker, that this government will see reason and will ensure that those young people's rights are enshrined and protected under a piece of legislation that will go a long ways to helping them deal with the prejudice and the racism and the bullying that they experience on a day-to-day level.

What else here? I have a big, long list. Traffic lights, the refusal to even install traffic lights to protect people's lives, which is . . . I'm afraid the list is a little too long, Mr. Speaker, and it's concerning because we have this stubbornness that keeps reflecting itself over and over in the actions of this government. And it certainly, I think, is perfectly exemplified in the seven-year struggle that working people have had to ensure that their rights are protected in a bill like essential services legislation.

[15:00]

Just a few other points that I want to reiterate to make sure that we get this on the record. We know that this government has put Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan workers through eight long, expensive years defending a law that ultimately was found to be unconstitutional. What we know is that the Sask Party refused to listen to stakeholders — they didn't even consult when the bill was first introduced in 2007 — and that they're putting short-term politics and catering to their own advisers instead of putting common sense and fairness on the table.

We know that this costs a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, that taxpayers' dollars, including taxpayer-paid lawyers were defending . . . to defend an unconstitutional law. It's a good example again of waste on the part of the Sask Party. They pushed through this law. They pushed through the defence in the courts. And I think, you know, certainly the working people had to fight to defend their rights, and that is an additional expense that we'll never see the total tab on for sure on that one, Mr. Speaker.

And I think people have to continually remember that this apology or this change of heart that we see in this bill was not something that this government got to voluntarily. They were forced kicking and screaming to this point. And despite what pundits are saying about it, you know, as a beautiful example of realizing when you're wrong, no, this government never did realize when they were wrong. They were told they were wrong all along, and finally because of the way the court system works, we had to go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada for them to take the proper action and introduce a bill like Bill 183. And I think a good example of why we know this is wrong is the way the court actually ordered the government to pay the union's legal fees. And again, who's paying for that?

It's the taxpayer. That's who's paying for it. Taxpayers are paying money for this government's mistakes.

Now as far as we can tell, Mr. Speaker, the new bill appears to follow the outline provided by the Supreme Court of Canada. We will take the opportunity in the next little while to review the details closely, and we know that working people throughout the province and people who are concerned about constitutional rights will do the same.

We're concerned. We know this government is still far too interested in helping their friends and insiders and big business, like foreign corporations, even when that's at the expense of everyone else. So those are kind of some of the main points that we wanted to raise, and I think he'll hear that from my colleagues as well as we start to engage in the adjourned debate on this Bill 183.

In terms of the timeline, we think that, you know, this probably came about as a . . . In December of 2006, there were contract talks that had stalled, and correction workers and snowplow operators went out on strike. We know that the opposition leader at the time, who is now the Premier, was publicly mulling about essential services legislation as early as January in 2007. Then we know that in June of 2007 there was a full-scale strike by health care workers. It was looming in June of 2007. And as soon as the government formed government, it was announced that they would introduce essential services legislation to ensure certain services are still provided if public sector employees go on strike. So that's when the bill was tabled. And at that time, the SFL commented on it, calling it the worst legislation for workers in the country.

On February 7th, 2008, the then Justice minister said that the courts — this is a quote — “The courts may make findings on our legislation at some point but right now my department drafts the legislation.” So you can see that stubbornness from the then Justice minister who's, interestingly enough, now the Labour minister. So he was very defensive about the bill at the time, refusing to consult before actually drafting the bill.

In 2008, the constitutional challenge began in July of 2008 and there were so many issues that were problematic in the bills, so in February of 2012 . . . So workers had to fight for four years. And the Queen's Bench ruled that it was unconstitutional, although at that point *The Trade Union Act* amendments were upheld.

Then we know that on March 5th of 2012, the provincial government decided to appeal, Mr. Speaker. At that point, they could have sat down in 2012 and had a look at it and said, you know what, this may be the way we should go. But no, they decided to appeal. And so a year later, in April of 2013, we got the Court of Appeal's ruling upholding the Sask Party government's Act. So then the SFL was again forced to continue the court action which then went on to the Supreme Court of Canada. And of course we all know that in January of this year they struck down the Act in a five-two ruling, and they found that unionized Canadian workers have a constitutionally guaranteed right to strike.

And as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that's really the silver lining of this cloud is that we now have it enunciated clearly from the

highest court in the land that unionized workers in Canada have a constitutionally guaranteed right to strike. And that is certainly the most important piece, I think, of this whole debate. And perhaps the struggle, while it was expensive and long, the results, the net result is one that will help workers across Canada and not just in Saskatchewan. So that's sort of the timeline that we have seen over the years.

Just a few comments that have come from some of the unions. I mentioned SGEU's press release earlier. But also SEIU-West [Service Employees International Union West] has also begun analyzing the bill. It was released on October 15th and the quote here I'd like to share is from Barbara Cape who's president of SEIU-West. And she says:

Although there appears to be some improvement, the devil is in the details. We had hoped for a more robust consultation process, however, the government did not begin to seek our input as a labour stakeholder until late August. SEIU-West members believe that taking the time to actually read the proposed legislation and consider its “real-world” implications is an important step in this process.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're sitting here in October of 2015. We don't have a lot of time to be able to debate this bill properly and we know that there will be further comments coming as people take . . . I'm sure people are looking through it carefully now and analyzing all the different provisions and seeing how that might impact their rights. And so there's going to be a lot of activity in the next few weeks on the part of I think labour unions and people who feel that the consultation process was really not a sufficient amount of time.

You have to wonder. The Supreme Court came down with their decision in January and consultations didn't begin until August. So was that eight months where there were no consultations, and then the government began its consultation process in August, late August, which is not a whole lot of time for people who are working, and labour organizations, to be able to have a good look at it.

There is satisfaction that the binding arbitration process is there. That's seen as a good thing. But the questions are there about accessibility and timeliness of the arbitration process and other resolution processes, and of course much of that we'll have to see how it works as the bill makes its way into law and begins being used.

Now the whole question I guess is, what is an essential service? And we're still no further ahead now than we were eight years ago in terms of what the legal definition of an essential service is going to look like. Taking it out of the legislation and putting it through the regulatory process is a common approach that we see often from this government. So obviously the scrutiny changes. Once it's not a bill and it becomes part of the regulation process, there isn't an opportunity for members opposite to actually take, provide comments or enter into any kind of debate on regulations. So that's something that happens through Executive Council, and we'll have to consult with the labour groups as these regulations come into effect, and see if indeed the definitions are working.

One thing that Barbara Cape did raise in her press release, and I'll share this quote with you, Mr. Speaker, is this. She says:

I think the timing of the introduction of this legislation is interesting. Given the fact that we are headed to the polls on Monday for a federal election, there may be a limited focus on this very important piece of legislation. I hope others afford it the scrutiny it really deserves.

And I would have to echo that, Mr. Speaker. This certainly needs a lot of scrutiny. It's not a small, short bill. It's a fairly extensive bill. So those kinds of things really will require extensive scrutiny.

And I know there's a lot of things going on in the political landscape right now, including an upcoming election in Saskatchewan as well. So we will have to see as it rolls along whether this is actually going to be the win that the unions are hoping it will be.

And just to share some of the quotes from pundits even in today's paper, we have Murray Mandryk reminding us. He says:

Let us not forget, the biggest motivation for amending Saskatchewan's essential services law was the Supreme Court of Canada decision striking down the original Bill 5 as unconstitutional.

And then he goes on to say:

The subsequent Saskatchewan Party government's law — or at least, the regulations that dictated how the law would be applied — read like it was written by a bunch of angry, vengeful party workers. It allowed the employer to dictate how many people could be deemed essential (95 per cent in some units), what jobs were essential (music therapists) and even what individual (George or Martha) were essential. Little wonder that the law was found by both Saskatchewan's Court of Queen's Bench and then the Supreme Court to restrict the fundamental collective bargaining [of the] right to strike.

So that's some of the commentary that we're seeing coming out through the media in this particular . . . once the bill has been introduced. It was introduced last week and now the commentary is coming forward.

Just a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker, on the Charter itself. Now we know that, I think section 2 is the freedom of association section in the Charter. Section 33 of the Charter is an interesting section as well and particularly section 33(1). It's known throughout Canada as the notwithstanding clause or the override power.

And there's an article in Wikipedia that talks a little bit about that. It's not something that has ever really been used successfully, although it has been used as a threat in a number of cases. And indeed our own Premier has been now included in the Wikipedia page as using it as a bit of a threat when he mused out loud in January that he might use the notwithstanding clause to protect the province's ability to force essential service employees back to work.

So I think people need to really think a little bit about when and where it would be appropriate for our Premier to actually use that clause. I'm pleased to see that he has decided not to go ahead and use it. I think it would have been a very dangerous and disturbing move if he had gone down that road. The override clause or the notwithstanding clause was a particular part of the negotiations in 1982 when the Charter was being negotiated. Very controversial in many ways. But I think it came about as part of the power struggle between the provincial governments and the federal government when negotiating the rights that were going to be enshrined because many of these rights affect provincial governments' abilities to pass laws. And I think this example is a perfect example of that, where section 2 and the freedom of association has trumped what this government saw would be essential services in the event of a strike.

So what's really interesting about this notwithstanding clause is that it doesn't really exist in any other democratic constitution that we know of, except maybe Israel. And there's a quote here in the Wikipedia article that says:

Constitutional scholar Peter Hogg has remarked that the notwithstanding clause "seems to be a uniquely Canadian invention." The U.S. Constitution gives no such powers to the States . . . but Article III, section 2 does authorize the Congress to remove jurisdiction from the Federal Courts. Not since World War II has Congress mustered the requisite majority.

[15:15]

It needs a majority. I'll carry on with the quote:

However, the concept of the notwithstanding clause was not created with the Charter. The presence of the clause makes the Charter similar to the Canadian Bill of Rights [from] (1960), which, under section 2, states that "an Act of Parliament" may declare that a law "shall operate notwithstanding the Canadian Bill of Rights." A primary difference is that the Bill of Rights' notwithstanding clause could be used to invalidate *any* right, not just specified clauses as with the Charter.

So I'll close the quote there, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to note that only Israel has added a device similar to the notwithstanding clause in 1992. So that was 10 years after our Charter was finalized.

So it's a very interesting piece, a part of our Charter, and I think one that was part of the political negotiations of the day. It was concerning and alarming when there was thought, the Premier expressed thoughts that it might be appropriate to invoke it at this point with the essential services law. I think we've seen reason prevail in that he hasn't gone forward with that yet, and hopefully that will not happen at any point when it comes to this important issue of essential services.

So just talking about the bill itself, we know that basically there's three types of changes. The first one is the business about workplace hazardous materials information system. So that's division 7 of part III of the existing Saskatchewan employment Act. And so again we're going to need to consult

with some of our . . . the members of the public and the workforce to see whether these changes to workplace safety are appropriate and whether they meet the requirements or the needs that are being identified here.

The second change that comes in is a new section 6-33, and this is a “notice of impasse and mediation or conciliation required before strike or lockout.” I believe these are the changes the minister spoke about where they’re going to have an opportunity to . . . I want to make sure I get this right. Oh, this is the essential services tribunal, I believe, where it’s being established, and:

No strike is to be commenced and no lockout is to be declared:

unless a labour relations officer or special mediator is appointed or a conciliation board is established pursuant to subsection (4).

So that’s clause 6-33(7), and I think that’s one that again we’ll need to take time and examine that with some of the people who are experts in this area.

The big change of course is in part VII where the entire section of part VII is repealed and the following is substituted. And this is the essential services section, so it’s quite a lengthy change. I think we’re looking at, you know, 14, 15 pages of legislation or 14 pages of legislation. We’re going to have to take time to look at this very carefully in the next . . . quickly, in the next few weeks to ensure that there’s nothing here that could cause this to go back to the Supreme Court again to ensure that workers’ rights are protected. And at that point I think, you know, once we have an opportunity, more of my colleagues will want to have an opportunity to speak to this as well.

So I’m honoured to have been able to get up and speak to this today. As I indicated earlier, I thought I would be getting up for a Throne Speech, but I guess that’s not going to happen. Sadly, we have a government that appears to be looking backwards instead of forwards.

We have a government who, you know, was criticizing the ILO for getting it wrong back in the day. And I wish they would eat crow. The members who expressed those opinions really should come forward and apologize for those comments at this point in time because I think it’s pretty clear the law of the land now is established. There is a constitutional right to strike. It’s protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and I guess we have the Sask Party government to thank for clarifying that. Unfortunately, it’s cost the taxpayers a whole lot of money to get to that point, and I regret that it took that much.

But we continue to see this government fixing its mistakes. I know the pundits seem to afford them a lot of leeway in doing that, and maybe that’s the way it is. But I think they need to pay a little more attention to what the folks in labour are saying. If the minister of the day had actually taken the time to consult and realize the error of his ways, we wouldn’t be speaking to this today in 2015.

So at this point, I’m going to move that we adjourn the debate on this bill, Bill 183. And I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say about the bill as well. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 183, *The Saskatchewan Employment (Essential Services) Amendment Act, 2015*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 179

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 179** — *The MRI Facilities Licensing Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to enter debate here this afternoon as it relates to Bill No. 179, *An Act respecting the Licensing and Operation of certain Facilities providing Magnetic Resonance Imaging Services and making consequential amendments to other Acts*.

We enter this debate at a time where there’s many pressures in health care, many created by this government, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I think what we see here is, you know, government that can’t get the job done in health care where it matters on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker. And we see them now basically entering off into almost a distraction of sorts from their poor record in health care, Mr. Speaker, and entering into terrain where they’re driving again that, you know, relentless private agenda that we see of this government, in this case going after the pocketbooks of families and not fixing a system that every Saskatchewan family deserves fair access to, not fixing and making sure that we have the capacity to make sure that MRIs are available to every Saskatchewan family in a timely way.

But a bit of an admission of failure of this government’s agenda, Mr. Speaker, and their recognition of their failure to get the job done where it matters to Saskatchewan people. And now pushing forward an agenda that certainly goes after the pocketbooks and credit cards of Saskatchewan people to take care of their health care, certainly that’s disappointing, Mr. Speaker.

We see as well that this is a government that has, you know, not been able to improve wait time for specialists. These wait times are alarming and concerning. They’ve gone in the wrong directions. We’ve recognized what this government hasn’t been able to do when it comes to emergency room waits, Mr. Speaker, a government that’s taken those waits in the wrong direction, Mr. Speaker, and now entering into a distractive agenda that goes after the pocketbooks and credit cards of Saskatchewan families instead of fixing access to MRIs and to health services and specialists for all Saskatchewan people. And you know, we see the deliberate piecemeal privatization of this government. It’s certainly short sighted and not in the best interests of the public today or over the long term, Mr. Speaker.

Basically what we're seeing under the Sask Party is that most patients will wait longer so that a few can jump the queue, Mr. Speaker. And you know, the government is building a system that's not based on evidence because we look to the experience in Alberta, and Alberta went down this path, and it didn't improve access to MRIs there. It actually lengthened wait times, Mr. Speaker. They have longer wait times than we have here in Saskatchewan with our current system.

And you see a government again defying common sense with its plan and pursuing I guess this ideological privatization agenda that we see of this government likely trying to distract from their failure to get the job done where it really matters in emergency rooms and where it matters around access to specialists, where it matters with access to surgeries, Mr. Speaker, where it matters with access to a doctor.

On many fronts Saskatchewan people know the realities of the health care system under this government. They know and can recognize the areas that haven't been addressed. They can recognize the mismanagement of this government, Mr. Speaker. And I know Saskatchewan people are, you know, concerned by this lack of a vision and plan that we see from the Sask Party.

We have to remember that there is multiple steps for folks to require an MRI. First a patient would see their doctor or GP [general practitioner], their primary care provider. We know that many, many people in Saskatchewan are struggling to see that GP. We know that this government is presiding over inaction when it comes to ensuring that we have family doctors in place, that we have primary care teams in place, not just for today but over the next number of years. And we see very troubling information around the lack of potential continuity of service with a pending crisis with access to family doctors and primary care in Saskatchewan.

And of course we know that that's sort of the first step, if you will, of going about accessing an MRI, so it's awfully troubling for Saskatchewan people who know the challenges of being able to access a family doctor under this government to see the lack of action and attention to the pressures on this area.

I know in Regina for example you have many doctors that are very close, family doctors that are very close to that retirement period in their life. They're speaking to us, Mr. Speaker, and saying this is something that needs to . . . that requires planning now, without having a crisis emerge in just a short number of years. And of course, you know, everyone would recognize that when you're responding to crisis it's far less effective than responding in a very planned and deliberate way at this point in time to address this problem now. And the crisis of course will cost families more, cost taxpayers more. It'll cost people their access to those services.

And it's disappointing, I think, for many Saskatchewan people to see a government not move the yardsticks the way that families deserve, the way communities deserve, to ensure that they have access to primary care and to doctors across Saskatchewan, that being the first step of course to moving along with getting access to an MRI.

Then of course we also know that another important aspect of receiving an MRI and the care that every family and every

person and every patient deserves is being referred to a specialist. And you know, we've heard what the Sask Party is doing on this front, Mr. Speaker, and its absolute neglect in its response to what we should be seeing, is a drastic and dramatic shortening of those wait times. Instead we see waits that are in excess of 300 days, Mr. Speaker, to access and to meet with that specialist. That's a major problem.

And you know, I think when we look at this bill and sort of its lack of addressing really what matters in health care, we see it as a costly distraction from what really matters. And it certainly doesn't, it doesn't allow the system to be improved in the way that every single Saskatchewan family and patient deserves.

And if the government continues to preside over, as we've seen, a record of doing a poor job on ensuring that doctors and primary care is in place for all Saskatchewan people across Saskatchewan, and then if we see the government continue to neglect to make things better by way of ensuring access to a specialist, this is more than problematic, Mr. Speaker. And this directly connects to the timeliness of care for Saskatchewan people, and that should be the focus of this discussion. That should be the focus of a vision and a plan from government.

But instead you see a government I think trying to sort of play obviously an ideological game, pursue an ideological agenda where they privatize another piece of our health care system. And we know that's what this government has done on so many other fronts, and not to the benefit of Saskatchewan people: very short-sighted management, but not improving things where it matters.

We also know that doctors refer their clients of course for diagnostic tests, and this is then where the MRI fits in. And often people need to see specialists again or be referred to someone else if more consultation is needed prior to their treatment, and then they wait for treatment. So that's how a patient typically enters the system and how they access care, Mr. Speaker. You're going to your primary care team. You're going to your doctor. You're waiting for that specialist. There's an ordering of diagnostics. And then often there's other consults as well, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

And I think if you sit down, and if the Premier . . . I know he's kind of, you know, lost touch with everyday families and the realities there, Mr. Speaker. But if the Premier were willing to get a sense of what families and patients are facing on this front, he would wake up to the reality that his piecemeal, costly plan around one diagnostic component isn't getting the job done in improving the system as a whole and ensuring the timely response to care that Saskatchewan people deserve.

And we know of course that with this legislation, we'll certainly see folks that'll be able to jump the queue, not just for MRI tests but also to get other diagnosis or continued follow-up with their doctors. And you know, certainly this is one small piece of the pie, but it matters, and it's a costly distraction for a government that would be better off focusing its interests into where they can make improvements for patients.

We need to fix a lot within health care, Mr. Speaker. We've

seen the neglect under this government, and it's going to take some focused, sustained efforts to repair that system for all, to improve that system for all, Mr. Speaker.

The just throw your hands up and admit an admission of failure that we see from the government opposite, Mr. Speaker, just doesn't cut it for Saskatchewan people. You know, this government said they were going to be ambitious about emergency room wait times, Mr. Speaker. And we heard the bluster and we heard the pomp and we heard the . . . There was lots of fanfare around it, Mr. Speaker, but no delivery, Mr. Speaker. Just didn't get the job done. Lots of news releases, lots of, sort of, spin around what they were setting out to do, Mr. Speaker, but while they were focusing all that energy on the communications plan, Mr. Speaker, they forgot to focus in on where they could actually make improvements for patients.

So as a result we've seen emergency room waits not get better but actually get much longer, Mr. Speaker. And we've got hour after hour that families are waiting at the General Hospital here in Regina or the Pasqua Hospital, Mr. Speaker, at a time where minutes matter in the lives of patients, and a time where there's great stress on those families.

And I know, I hear the stories actually on a very regular basis. They're the stories that families will share with us around, where they go in . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, members can shout loudly across the floor, Mr. Speaker, but what they'd be better off to recognize is that many, many families on a daily basis are going into these emergency rooms and they're wanting and deserving care, Mr. Speaker, at a time where they're stressed and pulled in many different directions, Mr. Speaker. And instead of seeing a government make improvements the way they had once promised, now we see a government, I guess, admit failure, put their hands up, Mr. Speaker, and have no plan to make improvements on that front.

We see, as well, this costly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And you know, the Minister of Health is shouting across the floor here today. You know, he'd be better off sitting down with health providers across Saskatchewan. He'd be better off listening to the realities that families are facing. And he'd be better off, Mr. Speaker, to not be sitting in the Assembly and shouting across the floor, Mr. Speaker, over a distractive, costly piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, one that will certainly take directly out of the pockets and add to the credit cards of Saskatchewan people. But he should be focused on improving access to care for all Saskatchewan people and improving access not just to the MRIs, Mr. Speaker, but improving the system as a whole.

And this is something we just don't see from this government. I think what they've decided, you know, we know the Premier is, you know, he's big into kind of polling and he's big into sort of plans around spin, but you know, sort of distractions, Mr. Speaker. I think he sees this legislation as something that allows him, I guess, to share to his right wingers, Mr. Speaker, that he's able to pursue this ideological agenda of privatization at all costs. And it also allows a distraction from the very poor record in health care of this Premier and of this government — the wait times for specialists that are unfair and far too long and going in the wrong directions, and the same thing in emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker.

Now of course any time you have a government in place, regardless of who they are, regardless of what party they represent, you hope that they are making decisions for the right reasons, Mr. Speaker. And you'd hope that the decisions they're making today make sense over the long term, Mr. Speaker.

That's just not the case with this government on decision after decision after decision. It's a government that just so often defies common sense and pursues its own agenda, pet projects, Mr. Speaker, that have cost taxpayers literally billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, of their hard-earned money to be spent in wasteful ways on pet projects of this government without the needed scrutiny, without the evidence to support it, Mr. Speaker.

And I heard the bill that was being spoken to just before this. That was the essential services legislation. And it's pretty outrageous, Mr. Speaker, that one of the first acts of this Premier and this government was to pull a fast one on Saskatchewan people after they had committed to a different position, Mr. Speaker, and to introduce legislation, Mr. Speaker, that was purely ideological, that hadn't required any sort of legal scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, that had no consultation with working people, Mr. Speaker, and that has now wasted a whole bunch of resources, a whole bunch of money, and many years and goodwill in this province, Mr. Speaker, to address something that has now . . . a bill, a law that was put forward by that Premier recklessly, Mr. Speaker, that in the end has been ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, Mr. Speaker.

You know, that's what happens with reckless governments. That's what happens with governments that are more focused on playing partisan ideological games as opposed to governing for Saskatchewan people and doing so with a long view, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's evident in file after file after file that this government really, really manages kind of in the short term but, to be honest, they're not even delivering today, Mr. Speaker. They certainly aren't delivering a plan that makes sense over the long term, Mr. Speaker. But they are caught up so often in their own political partisan interest, Mr. Speaker, not in the public's interest. Not in the interest of this province today or over the long term.

And I think that what Saskatchewan people expect of their government is for a government to review the evidence, to make decisions that are the right decisions for the right reasons. And we just haven't seen that. And I guess as it relates to the MRIs, I would press the government to share where the evidence is. I'd urge them to, you know, share with Saskatchewan people what evidence may exist to guide this short-sighted type discussion, Mr. Speaker.

You know, there is no evidence, Mr. Speaker, that privatization of MRIs or a proposed two-for-one deal that they're bringing forward — this costly credit card scheme for MRIs — there is no evidence to suggest that this will decrease wait times for Saskatchewan people. In fact we know that just next door in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, who has private-payer MRIs, that that province has the longest wait times in the country to access an MRI. And certainly I think we need to be able to look to that sort of experience, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope that, from

looking to that jurisdiction, that this government would be able to see I guess some of the light on this matter, Mr. Speaker. And you would then hope and urge them to come to a conclusion that is in the best interests of the public.

And you know, I think that there's just not the evidence there that you would expect a government to bring forward. And we certainly will be, you know, pushing government throughout committee processes, throughout the time in this legislature to, I guess, to see light on this front, Mr. Speaker, to look to the actual evidence and to produce some evidence, Mr. Speaker, as to what is guiding this currently misguided decision, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I think that there's concerns as well about jumping the queue, Mr. Speaker, and people . . . the pressure that places on a family, Mr. Speaker. Instead of fixing a system for all and ensuring a fair and equitable access to that service, Mr. Speaker, we see a government that's more intent on creating a system that allows those to jump the line, and potentially then jumping the line for surgery, Mr. Speaker.

And as we've said, and as I've said, Mr. Speaker, we see a government that, if you look at what's important to ensuring timely response of services, Mr. Speaker, if this government were really interested in this discussion, then what we should be focusing on are those fronts. We should be making sure primary care doctors are available. We should be making sure that the access to specialists is improving, not getting worse as we see under this government. And we should be making sure, Mr. Speaker, that we're improving MRIs, access to MRIs for all, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I like a witty heckle any day in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and that was one.

So really what we see, Mr. Speaker, is a government that's distracting from an agenda that isn't improving things for patients, a government that's governing very much in the short term and seems to have lost touch with Saskatchewan families and people, and a government that far too often defies common sense and pursues an agenda that doesn't have the evidence behind it, that doesn't make sense over the long term, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, when we look to Alberta next door, Mr. Speaker . . . And you know, this should be a relevant example for this government, but you know, in Saskatchewan, we should be improving access for all patients to ensure that they're able to receive an MRI in a timely way. Right now, 90 per cent of people receive access within 88 days, Mr. Speaker. But in Alberta, 90 per cent of people wait up to 247 days, Mr. Speaker. You know, that's certainly . . . In Saskatchewan, it's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that we do a better job in Saskatchewan.

And we have the resources and the ability to do so, Mr. Speaker, but it's not through short-sighted, piecemeal privatization with a distractive agenda item like this that allows that to happen. In fact it fragments that system and puts a competition on the very resources and capacity that's needed to improve the system, and puts various systems in competition with one another that allow us not to make the improvements that the public deserves.

[15:45]

We also know that the experience in other provinces is that professionals will be poached from the public system, like technologists, which is certainly an important component of this whole discussion. We know that the capacity as a whole won't be increased, the capacity of our system won't be increased with the approach of this government. And you know, it's one that certainly brings complexity and challenge to the management of that system over the long term.

So we know that this government isn't fond of looking to other jurisdictions to learn from, Mr. Speaker. We see that really in this government's relentless pursuit of P3s, as another example, Mr. Speaker. It's disappointing that on issue after issue that this government is unwilling to learn from the experiences of other provinces.

It's disappointing that this province, when it comes to P3s, isn't willing to recognize the challenges that occurred in Alberta as it relates to access to schools. For example, Mr. Speaker, the concerns around cookie-cutter schools, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to ones that are built to serve communities, that can be utilized entirely by communities, or the fact that in Alberta the government recognized that there just simply wasn't the competition in the system that they had created with the P3 bidding process to ensure best value for taxpayers. And what we saw in Alberta was a then Conservative government actually abandoning that costly P3 process, recognizing the challenges that existed.

But not here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. For this government, you know, they're stubborn, and it's full bore ahead, Mr. Speaker. And you know, it's sort of like full bore ahead with their pet projects and their partisan interests but, you know, it's the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, that are getting taken for a ride.

And when we talk about who will be paying for the decisions of today and the short-term decisions of today, it's a generation and more of taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, who are going to be on the hook for the bad deals that this government continues to push taxpayers into, Mr. Speaker, without accountability, without transparency.

We recognize as well that this government was unwilling to learn from Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, that when they scrapped the P3s in that jurisdiction, they actually would have saved \$2 million per school. And that's provided from the independent auditor of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, that provided that information and recognized that all that money had been wasted over the years, that could have been better spent, Mr. Speaker, on the priorities that are truly important to the people of their jurisdiction.

Or we see basically what auditors are weighing in on in other jurisdictions, in British Columbia and in Ontario, where we see massive amounts of taxpayers' money that has been put at risk, Mr. Speaker. Where we see out of Ontario, I believe, the assessment was that in the initial value-for-money charade that governments go through — we see the government doing that right now — but through that charade, one that doesn't have independent accountability to it, that in that province the

governments had inappropriately attributed bogus risk transfer numbers, Mr. Speaker. Which I believe, if you look to the auditor's report in Ontario, could have cost taxpayers up to about \$8 billion in Ontario over a number of those P3 projects, Mr. Speaker.

You would think that would be of interest to a Finance minister or to government opposite. But then you would have to assume, Mr. Speaker, that the governing party was actually focused on the long term, that they weren't just pursuing an ideological agenda, that they weren't just distracting from their poor record on various fronts, Mr. Speaker. So you would think, Mr. Speaker, that the government opposite would learn from other jurisdictions as we've seen this relentless pursuit of, you know, private schemes for infrastructure. But we don't see that.

We hear the same sort of tired spin and answers from the minister here today, Mr. Speaker, who's unwilling to provide the accountability that the taxpayers deserve, and it's the same tired spin. It's like they took their speaking notes — and I'm sure they did, Mr. Speaker — from those other provinces back when those governments were still pretending that going down these private P3 routes were somehow going to deliver for the public. So they're using those same lines but unfortunately, as you let this string play out, the reality is this government's relentless on putting taxpayers on the hook in the same sort of way that these governments in other provinces have, and then of course subjecting taxpayers to waste, Mr. Speaker, to spending that's not needed when we could be prioritizing those dollars into making improvements for everyone in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So we call on this government, you know, to hopefully learn from other jurisdictions. It's getting increasingly frustrating, Mr. Speaker, I know for Saskatchewan people to see this government just ramming forward with its own agendas, defying experiences from other provinces. You know, I used the example of P3s, Mr. Speaker, the rent-an-infrastructure schemes that we've seen in other jurisdictions.

And we see as well the impact on Saskatchewan business, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, we've got exceptional businesses and workers all across Saskatchewan, businesses that have invested and built their companies here in this province, businesses that have invested in training, workers who have built their lives here, paid taxes here. And we see those very companies and those very workers now being bypassed by a government who is pursuing an agenda that defies common sense, that costs taxpayers more, and that bypasses those companies from the very important work and the very important projects.

It just doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker, to see a government so relentless to build a scheme and a structure with its infrastructure plans that basically doesn't ensure a level playing field for Saskatchewan companies. It actually has a whole bunch of added costs to those very companies to participate in these processes and shuts out the vast majority of Saskatchewan companies, and then doesn't fulfill what a government should in ensuring good mortgage-paying jobs all across this province.

And again it seems to me to be a government that has lost some of its care, that seems to have lost touch with Saskatchewan families, and in this case lost touch with Saskatchewan

businesses, whether it's in the design community, or in architecture, or whether it's somebody in engineering, or whether it's our contractors and our manufacturers, Mr. Speaker.

We see a government who is just all too willing and rather relentless to build schemes and structures to its infrastructure projects that don't allow Saskatchewan companies to have a fair shot at it and actually have big bills to participate . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member opposite says that's just not the case, Mr. Speaker. But I would urge the members opposite to sit down with some of the fine businesses across Saskatchewan who have been caught up in the costly bidding process, one that has taken real dollars out of their businesses, Mr. Speaker, taken real dollars out of their businesses, and one that doesn't ensure a fair shot for many other companies across this province to participate.

So we would hope that the Government of Saskatchewan would have an interest in learning from these other jurisdictions, but it's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that they've sort of . . . that they're locked in their plan and that they're ramming forward with their own agenda. Again just, you know, looking at what Saskatchewan people deserve, you know, they deserve a government that's not going to simply look for its own sort of costly ideological pet projects, Mr. Speaker. They deserve a government that will focus on what's in the best interests of today and tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. And we don't see that with this government.

When it comes to improving health services and access to MRIs, Mr. Speaker, and more timely surgeries, we see a government that through this legislation isn't making things better, but really is just further, you know, more of an admission of failure of this government to get the job done where it matters.

And I know we've been talking, we've been talking in this Assembly about, you know, the government's promises they had in place for access to, you know, wait times in emergency rooms. And it's laudable to have an ambitious goal on this front, and then it's critical that a government can get the job done.

You know, but we didn't see that with this government. We saw, you know, all the spin and communications game around the goal, Mr. Speaker, but no efforts to actually improve on emergency room wait times for Saskatchewan people. And we actually see that wait times have gotten worse, Mr. Speaker. So it's an example of a government that makes announcements but then just is unwilling to roll up their sleeves and to do the hard work, and to see a project through to the end, Mr. Speaker, and sort of throwing their hands up now, Mr. Speaker.

If we think about what's important for the public, to receive an MRI and ultimately the full health care response that they require, a surgery that they require, we know that that patient and that family must first enter in through the doors of a doctor or a primary health care team, Mr. Speaker. And we see on too many fronts that Saskatchewan people don't have adequate access to primary care or to doctors in this province, Mr. Speaker. But we don't see that in this government's plan, Mr. Speaker. We see a government instead that's focused on its own

agenda.

So if we were to really care about improving things for Saskatchewan patients as we should, we'd be fixing that whole cycle in a comprehensive way that improves the access to the primary care, that improves the access to the doctor, that actually makes improvements with access to the specialists that are needed, not make waits for specialists increase to almost an entire year as we've seen under this government, Mr. Speaker. And we would see a government that would learn from the evidence of other jurisdictions to invest wisely today and to fix a system for all, Mr. Speaker.

Instead we see a government bring forward a half-baked bill, Mr. Speaker, that just isn't going to improve the system for all, and one that's certainly going to be costly to many Saskatchewan people. It creates inequities and challenges within the system, and we should all expect better from our government, Mr. Speaker. So at this point in time, though, as it relates to Bill No. 179, I adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 179, *The MRI Facilities Licensing Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:57.]

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