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# DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

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### **Bill No. 118 – The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act**

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise tonight to enter into the debate on Bill No. 118, *An Act respecting the Saskatchewan Polytechnic and making consequential amendments to other Acts and Regulations*. And as we look through it, it seems that the most striking part of this is related to the name change of this pretty important educational institution here in Saskatchewan. And there are some parts to go along with that: the ability to raise funds for property, the changing of the CEO [chief executive officer] now as a president, but essentially it is the Saskatchewan Polytechnic.

And it is one that we have some curiosity about in terms of why. We appreciate the fact the nature of technical training has evolved and will continue to evolve. And that's an important thing. It's important that we keep abreast of those changes to make sure our youth are enabled to do, to enter into the workforce and be able to get those good jobs and create those great opportunities for themselves and to start a young family if they're so inclined or whatever they wish to do to pursue their potential into adulthood.

And I know we often reflect on SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] has that ability to do that. And I think it's important. And we've seen changes; you know, it sort of ebbs and flows between the university. Is it a liberal art education or a technical education? And clearly with so many things happening in our province now, we do need to have that technical education.

But I am, you know, interested in this in terms of what this all means in terms of a changing mandate and is it the right thing to be doing. And as this government is loath to do, to get out and talk to the people about what do you see as an important role for post-secondary education, I think it's important to ask that question of what drives his change.

And to go through this new name change . . . And it's quite significant. You know, I know that, as my colleagues have remarked, or even when I think about when I was growing up near Moose Jaw, we thought of the Saskatchewan Technical Institute, STI,

thought of Kelsey in Saskatoon, Wascana here, Palliser in Prince Albert. And they seemed to be able to identify with their local communities, and they were a key part of their local communities. Those names really reflected that. And there was a certain community pride, and there was a certain pride in the institute that you attended too.

And I'm not sure, now that we've gotten rid of the word SIAST, SIAST from what I understand will no longer be used, it will be Saskatchewan Polytechnic or it will be Sask Polytechnic, Sask Poly. What will be the short name for . . . What will the kids get to know their school as? It will be Sask Poly, Poly Sask? I don't know . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, yes. You know, this may not be a . . . I'm curious about this because, you know . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, you spend and then maybe, maybe, maybe they haven't thought this through. Maybe they haven't thought that through, but you do have branding exercises. And a lot of major institutions spend a lot of time thinking about the name of their organizations. Maybe it'll be in the regulations. Maybe they have a name in the regulations.

But I think what's interesting is the minister, the minister points out there's . . . And I'll quote. I'll quote this. And this is from page 4181 from November 25th, and this is what the minister says. And I quote:

Mr. Speaker, SIAST is the newest member of Polytechnics Canada and joins other prestigious organizations, including the British Columbia Institute of Technology, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Polytechnic, and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, as well as Red River College.

Now it seemed only one of those had the interest to add polytechnic to their name. British Columbia Institute of Technology kept their name even though they became a polytechnic, which really meant that you could do more applied research, and you could do work to help with the local economic development. Northern Alberta Institute of Technology did not change their name. Now maybe they just . . . I don't know why they wouldn't change their name. That would be a good question to know. And the Red River College in Manitoba, even though it became a polytechnic, did not change its name.

So why are we in Saskatchewan throwing out SIAST? A lot of people have come to know what SIAST means. Will they know what polytechnic means? They didn't change the name in Manitoba. And maybe the folks from Moose Jaw, maybe the member from Moose Jaw didn't know that when he voted for this bill in caucus. But in Manitoba . . . Well, this is what this bill is all about, a name change. This bill is all about a name change . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It sure is. It sure is. That's essentially . . . They become a polytechnic and they've added things to it, but it's a post-secondary institution that focuses on technical knowledge.

You know, I see these other institutes like the British Columbia Institute of Technology, now I would think they have some credibility in BC [British Columbia], decided not to change their name even though they became a polytechnic. So what's the big deal?

But in Saskatchewan we're throwing out a pretty well-established and institutional name that has a lot of merit and credibility. And people look to it and say, SIAST, we know what that's about. It's a great institution and it has numerous campuses throughout the province. People know SIAST. They know Palliser. They know Wascana. They know the Moose Jaw —I think of it as STI —Palliser. Palliser is what it is.

So what's the deal? This will be the discussion. And then they change the CEO to the president. So I am really curious. In Manitoba, Red River College so, you know, the name change, we have some questions about this. We have some questions about this. And you know, we support and we think it makes a lot of sense that technical training evolves. And the idea that, you know, the concept of the polytechnic that represents evolution, it's not a bad . . . It is a good one. It's a good one. We think that's a good idea. But it's the name change and this is what we see largely in this bill. That'll be the significant piece that the public will see, is now we have SIAST become Sask Polytechnic. And maybe they feel that's what has to happen.

So clearly this means an awful lot to the government. We see that they get quite animated over the name and they must like it. So that's a good read of what's happening over on the government side.

I'm not sure, again though, it would be interesting and maybe in estimates we'll have a question about how much did this name change cost? Is it going to cost anything? Did they put anything aside? They will say probably it didn't cost anything. And then next November we'll come back and we'll have supplementary estimates. We've heard this before where it's not going to cost anything —not a thing, not a thing. And then we see them come back and say, you know, it did. It's like the employment Act where they said it was not going to cost a penny to do it. And all of a sudden here it comes back and it cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So this is not good planning. This is not good planning, and we know the other side is known for that. So I'm interested to see how this goes, and we will have questions in the committee about had they thought through the identification of this and what that will mean. And maybe it doesn't mean anything. Maybe it doesn't mean a thing. But we've seen the evolution, the changes of technical education in Saskatchewan with a proud history, a very strong history. And while we support the increased capacity and building capacity of those institutions to deliver the programming, that's hugely important.

But I have to say, BC, if it's good enough to keep their old names of the British Columbia Institute of Technology, so much the same in Alberta and the same in Manitoba, why in Saskatchewan we've gone to such an extreme, I don't know. It doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to me.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know we'll have lots of comments, and many of my colleagues still would like to speak on this. We will have questions in committee on that. But I think that at this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of Bill

No. 118, *An Act respecting the Saskatchewan Polytechnic and consequential amendments to other Acts and Regulations*. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.