

FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD) Published under the authority of The Honourable Dan D'Autremont Speaker

N.S. VOL. 57 NO. 18B TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2014, 19:00

Bill No. 151 – The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2014

Mr. Forbes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise tonight and enter into the debate on Bill No. 151, *An Act to amend The Pharmacy Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*. And I think this is an important piece of legislation. Whenever we talk about professional regulations and this type of thing, it's a key thing that we talk about what those professionals can and cannot do and how they conduct their businesses in terms of dealing with complaints and how they discipline themselves, all of that kind of thing.

And so we see an expansion here of this profession to include pharmacist technicians and that type of thing, and they're now allowed to prescribe and administer vaccines. And I don't know how many of the folks here got their flu vaccine. I went to get mine, and it was at Prairieland exhibition, and it was quite the thing. Actually it was interesting how many people are taking that so much more seriously now.

I know when we talk about different diseases and how they can wreak havoc in public health, we only have to watch the news and we can see when we're not prepared or we don't have the proper resources. And it can happen here in Canada. We saw it in Toronto with SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome], but we also saw it, and we're seeing it as we speak in Africa with Ebola. Clearly our medical professions are very, very important, and pharmacists clearly are.

And I can speak... You know, as we all age, we tend to get to know our pharmacists a little bit better for a whole host of different reasons, and I can tell you that I feel really good about the people who help me out on a regular basis. They know who I am and they give me great advice, and I feel that they really take their work very seriously. It's an honourable profession, and it's one that goes way back in history, and it has a whole lot of roots. I know that we think of . . . And particularly in this kind of legislation, we're not talking about necessarily herbalists or those types of folks, even though they have an awful lot to offer too. But these are more the university trained, the ones who are dealing

with the prescriptions from doctors.

But you know, I have to say that it was interesting. When we were in Cuba on the last winter holiday, we stopped in at a museum of a pharmacist and very . . . You know, the history of pharmaceuticals and the important role that they play in our communities is quite something else. Clearly someone who can stop the pain has a huge place in our society. We respect them dearly, and we want them to be treated well, but when things go wrong, we are also pretty snarly about the whole thing because we're in pretty bad moods about our particular health.

And so when we have this kind of thing happening, we are very interested. And we see, you know, an expansion of this whole issue of the professions and how they are mandated to look after themselves. And I know as we look across the whole realm, I think of, in social services, the whole issue around social workers and the use of their name. They need a little work there. We think this is something that the government should be paying attention to, but here they're much more, much more protective, and that's a good thing.

I'm just going to take a minute to review the minister's remarks. He talks about how he recognizes the important role pharmacists play within the whole issue of health and delivering good health services to the public and how they play an important part, working on their full scope of practice within a collaborative team, and that's huge. And now we're expanding that to talk about pharmaceutical pharmacist technicians, and that's important. Talk about the full skill and making sure that they're using their training to its full limit, particularly in rural areas where pharmacies may be open longer hours than medical clinics or more easily accessed. And that's true.

And we see that because quite often, you know, in the past you would have a drugstore and that would be where the pharmacist would work out of. It was their own store. But quite often now we see them partnered up with a bit of a convenience store. Or you even see to the extent of London Drugs, which is a full on, almost equivalent to a department store what I would be familiar with in the old days of the department store. I mean you can buy almost anything at London Drugs, but it started out as a drugstore.

So this is important that we take a look at how do we modernize the language. So this talks about allowing pharmacists to administer vaccines and drugs such as flu shot and vitamin B₁₂, and order, access, and use lab tests, working in collaboration with a physician. And that makes a lot of sense in a province such as ours that has issues of access to medical services, whether they be in the Far North, whether they be in rural Saskatchewan, and I think this is an important thing.

And so the whole issue though really is to make sure that they are done well and that they're safe, and there's a process of moving it forward. So they're changing the name of the legislation to *The Pharmacy and Pharmacy Disciplines Act*. Thinking that it's a better clarification for regulating two separate pharmacy professions — the pharmacist and the pharmacy technicians — and clarifying the terminology around the pharmacy ownership.

And as well, our goal is to provide leadership. It talks about that kind of thing, another example about how they're putting the patient first. That may be what they think they do, but clearly, you know, we see other evidence. And that evidence is brought forward every day during question period about how we don't think they're really doing that, and so they put that plug in. I'm not sure if it fits in there, because clearly that is something that we have some questions about. We will question them every day on that.

I do want to say as I was reading the Act, that there was a whole issue of fines. And fines now will go from 5,000 to 100,000, and as well from 15,000 to 100,000. And I'm just wondering how that fits into the Canadian landscape with other pharmacists and penalties. What is the landscape across Canada in terms of fines for pharmacists who break their regulations, whether they be public law or I assume an offence within their own profession? So we need to understand that more fully.

But we do think that it's important that professionals take their work seriously, and if there's a breach of conduct, that they're not doing their work appropriately. And we all know that particularly when it comes to pharmacists and the kind of things that are involved, that if there are errors made, if there are errors made, that there should be significant consequences.

And you know what I'm thinking of this stuff that we're seeing in Ottawa today and yesterday around thalidomide babies that were born 54 years ago, the impact that's having of 94 people who were born without limbs, and how when pharmacists or the pharmacy industry can go so wrong, can go so wrong, and yet we have not taken full responsibility.

I don't know if folks are following this discussion in Ottawa, but it's one that we should pay attention to in Saskatchewan here because we have a situation where there's 94 people who have survived to this stage of 54 years, and I think this is really, really an important thing. And we need to see the Canadian government step up. I don't know if the provincial government has a role in this, but we think that there's clearly a situation where regulations, if they go wrong, have dire consequences.

And ironically, Mr. Speaker, in the United States, they had no babies born because of that serious situation because it was a Canadian who was working at the federal drug agency in Washington who stopped that process of approving the drug in question. And therefore Americans have no experience with what we have in Canada or Europe. And so I would hope that in Ottawa they take this very seriously and they address this issue quickly, because there's less than 94 people, or there's 94 folks who are still alive with the condition. They are 54 years old now. And because it all happened very, very quickly in one period of time and the fact that many of their parents have passed away, and the question is, who will protect these folks or help them when they grow older into their senior years?

It's a miracle and it's a wonderful thing that they've been able to live, and particularly full lives, but the fact for many of them, but the fact is that when we need to ... We need to take pharmaceuticals very seriously. And so we are appreciative. And so we'll have

more questions around the fines and that type of thing.

I did want to say, and I just wanted to draw attention to, again, around the whole thing about protection of title and how that's very, very important. But I do have questions because, as I said in Social Services where the protection of the title, social worker, is not so adhered to, and that has extreme consequences or dire consequences as well. So we'll be having questions about that, because the government right across the board, whether you're a social worker or a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician, there should be a seriousness towards the title, the title of work. And it seems to be applied unevenly across the professions here in Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know that others will want to get into this discussion around the pharmacy Act and the implications of that. It's one that has a lot of interest, and particularly, what are the unintended consequences? As I said, and when I'm just thinking now that when the fines, potential for fines go from 5,000 to 100,000, I hope that we're not seeing an increase in fees for prescriptions that cover for any problems in that area. We hope that's not an unintended consequence for us here in our province.

So it'll be interesting to see how that plays out. It'll be interesting to know how many fines are or have been applied across the province. I know I did read of several drugstores that were charged, I think a year ago, around some infractions. And so it's not unheard of, but it is one that we should be taking very seriously for sure. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know that others will want to get into debate on other bills as well, and we have a list before us for tonight. So I would like to move adjournment of Bill No. 151, *An Act to amend The Pharmacy Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*. Thank you very much.