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Bill No. 89 *The Creative Saskatchewan Act*

Mr. Forbes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and enter into the debate on Bill No. 89, *An Act respecting Creative Saskatchewan*. And it was introduced just last week it looks like, April 8th, about a week ago today. Monday it came forward. So we haven't had much time to take a look at it.

There certainly has been a lot of attention paid to this file and clearly there should be. This represents our culture. It represents who we are. And we have such a proud history here in Saskatchewan that we really need to make sure we do the right thing here. And so clearly this is one that's going to cause a lot of interest from our side because we have seen some, I would say, bungling of this file when it comes to the film tax credit and how that was handled. It was clearly an ideologically driven decision where you have reports and then after the fact and then you have ministers, and more than one minister and the Premier who cannot explain fully why is it when you see a healthy, thriving industry, creative industry, that seemed to be singled out and attacked the way that it was. And so we have lots of questions. We have lots of questions about this. And I know that as we move forward, this will unfold more.

And I think in our 65th anniversary of the Arts Board, of which we are very proud here in Saskatchewan, the first outside the first that was set up in Britain . . . And so we have a proud history of creating an environment where artists are respected and they can thrive. But it is a challenge, and so clearly we need to make sure as a government we recognize our role to be supportive and make sure that artists receive the training, the education, and then the environment in which they can thrive and in which they can be also viable.

And I know that this government likes to think that everything is all about entrepreneurship, but there is an artistic value. And sometimes that is a challenge. I think about in my own city, in my own riding, where we have the Remail Art Gallery coming up in a few years to be built. And we're looking forward to that, and already Mrs. Remail has bought 20 prints by Picasso. And of course Picasso, in many ways, was driven to do his art and it wasn't about being an entrepreneur. It was about seeking his fulfillment of

his artistic vision and what that meant, and I think that's an important element. And I'm not actually seeing it from this government.

I see a government that views the world through the business lens, which is appropriate. In many instances it is an appropriate, it is an appropriate world view for sure. The entrepreneurial drive is an important one. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I spoke about one story today in a member's statement that it can be and it should be honoured and allowed to thrive.

But I am concerned when we see a government that is picking winners and losers and then coming up with after-the-fact kind of initiatives. And we I think have a lot of questions, will have lots of questions about the work here, and considering too that this bill will only be able to be debated a few short weeks before it becomes law and we really won't get to know it in the detail that we should have. And I know the minister and his government often talks at length about its consultation process, but clearly if there's an area where you can see . . . And I actually can point out very, very many instances where this government has failed in terms of consultations. We can add the cultural community as yet another one.

And I think that whether it was environmental or whether it was when we talked a few years ago about the world or *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and the lack of consultation on that and whether that was the Bill 85 and the lack of consultation on that, and the list goes on. The list goes on. And we saw it with the film tax credit that all of a sudden it came out of nowhere. And that was a real problem. So these folks suffer a major lack of credibility when it comes to consultation and how do they pick winners and losers. And clearly this is yet another example that we are concerned about. Will this follow, go down that road? And what does this mean for the cultural community?

So we'll have questions but we want to make sure we talk a fair bit about this because not only when we talk about the artistic vision and how we make sure people in their drive to commercialize their initiatives, it's not only about being a commercial success. It's about artistic success and that sometimes is an uncomfortable thing because we often think of artistic things as only the sense is it pleasing to the eye. It has to be much more than that. It has to represent who we are and it's about honouring and respecting the artist's vision of the world before us.

The minister has in his remarks, and each of us will probably take different perspectives on this, but I do want to talk about one that is near and dear to my heart and that is from the worker point of view here. The minister talks about microenterprises. And I know that over the course of the past several years, folks that are involved in the cultural community have raised concerns about what does it mean to be a worker in these enterprises, and whether it's having a pension at the end of their work, their careers, and some sort of stability and predictability. That's a big deal. That's a big deal for everyone. And for those who are in the arts, it's a very significant deal because they don't get regular paycheques and so how do we make sure, well how do we make sure that happens? How do we make sure?

One of the biggest areas . . . Well there's many and I want to talk about a living wage and

what does that mean for those people who are in the arts. What does it mean to have a living wage? Not just the minimum wage but a wage in which you can support your family, have your kids participate in our community activities, that type of thing. And why is it that they must pay a certain price because their work is not being honoured? So how does that meet this? This is very, very important work.

A few years ago we did, when we were on government side, we did a project around the vulnerable worker. And many people in the arts feel themselves as vulnerable workers because they're at risk in terms of so much that many of us who are in the regular workforce take for granted — the regular paycheques, the protection particularly around labour standards. Quite often labour standards does not meet the unique needs of the cultural community. And so it would be very interesting to read how and talk to the minister about his world view of how does he view protection when he talks about microenterprises for those who are engaged in the cultural sector.

The other one that is very, very, very important of course is occupational health and safety and the protection from injuries that may occur in that circumstance. And I think of two that are. And it's the visual arts, both as sculptors who are dealing with a lot of dust in studios that are not vented properly, that type of thing. How do we deal with that? That's really important that we make sure that we do that.

Folks who are involved with the visual arts, particularly painting, that's really critically important because again it's the studios and workspaces that really should be upgraded and that because of poor ventilation or different circumstances that they don't meet safety standards. And somehow we have to be able to meet that and help artists be able to do that — have safe workplaces. And it's not an easy thing to do because these folks don't have a lot of money, a lot of resources. And how do we make sure that's the case?

And you can go through several, several examples of where, in terms of occupational health and safety, it would be an important area that we should look at. Now clearly in a province that has been talking about Mission: Zero, that this is one area I think that we should really take a look at, you know.

And unfortunately I don't know in fact if this industry makes an impact on our WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] stats just because of the size of the industry, but also that many are just not registered. And it's one of those kind of circumstances where you don't really, you're not having the kind of impact that maybe, say the construction industry is; whether it's commercial or residential, it's just not the same size so it doesn't have the impact. But we know it's there. And when we have legislation like this, it is our responsibility as a government that we do the right thing, that we think about the needs of everyone. And when we take pride in our arts, that we know it's been done in a safe process that has not been exploitive, but in fact it's one that we can all share in pride. And that's very, very important.

And it used to be, well that's just an artist's life. Or, I think, in many ways they were referred to as the starving artists. And I think we've come a long way in appreciating that just isn't on anymore. That might have been quaint at one time, but it's not on anymore. And we have to make sure people of all walks of life have a living wage, a safe place to

work, and that when we talk about this kind of work that we're making sure that there is a standard, that there is a standard.

And when we had talked about actually, in our consultations in the fall on Bill 85, one of the concepts that came up was how do we protect individual contractors or the small contractors? Now artists may not think of themselves in that way, and I know the minister has raised the concept of the entrepreneur, and in many ways that is the reality they find themselves in. But is there protection for them and does this legislation do that or is it a vehicle for funding? And while that may be good and that may be what part of the answer is, we need much more rigorous work around this area.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to just review what I've said, that in fact we believe this government suffers a significant, significant gap in terms of their integrity in terms of the work in the creative field, the cultural area, just because of the kind of work that's gone on, particularly last year with the film tax credit in the film industry where we've seen a gutting of an industry and people moving away. And it's so tragic when you see that and you know people who have moved away, that when they talk about how they're going to do the right thing, well the proof will be in the pudding. And we will see what this means.

So they have a lot of work, a lot of work to do this. And you know, for a government that often talks about how people should admit when they've done wrong, we've not seen this from this government, not even when the chamber of commerce says, you know, I think they were wrong headed about the film tax credit. This government will just not admit that on that one they did the wrong thing. They did the wrong thing. And it shows a certain lack of class, and it hits them in integrity. And it doesn't make a lot of common sense, does it?

And so, Mr. Speaker, with that, you know, I think that we will have many, many questions about The Creative Saskatchewan Act, particularly in terms of their world view of what does it mean from an artistic point of view or is everything going to be driven by a commercialization entrepreneur world view, which in and of itself is not a bad thing. But if you apply that to everything you do, then we have problems and we have problems. It's not the type of Saskatchewan that I know many people value and think highly of and, as I've said, particularly when it comes to the Arts Board and how it's been arm's length and supports arts in a full way with respect and integrity.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we will have a lot of questions. And I will be asking the minister especially when it comes to the labour perspective because I know that there is been a lot of concerns that's overlooked, that's overlooked, that the government thinks if you send a cheque, you've got the grant. There's no need for labour standards or occupational health and safety discussions. And that clearly is not the case. It clearly is not the case.

We need to do more to protect our artists and make sure that, like any other person who works in this province, whatever their work is, that they're safe and they're not exploited. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know there'll be many people who want to speak on Bill No. 89, *The Creative Saskatchewan Act*, and therefore I adjourn debate on Bill No. 89. Thank you.

