

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. 28A WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2015, 13:30

Bill No. 174 – The Registered Teachers Act

Mr. Forbes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into the debate on Bill No. 174, *An Act respecting the Regulation of Teachers and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. And I think this is a very significant Act, being one that is certified as a teacher today, and so this is one that I feel that I have a few comments to make and I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this debate here before us. And it's quite . . . It is a significant Act because it has changed . . . it will be changing the way we do things here in Saskatchewan and we want to make sure that we get it right, that there are no unintentional consequences, that we take . . .

Mr. Forbes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity again to enter into the debate here. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a very significant Act and I will be talking a bit about the events that led us to this.

I do want to recognize though that this has been . . . will be a significant change in the way we've done this for many decades, I think going back to the '30s or '40s when the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] was first created. And the changes that happened . . . I'm not sure how long the previous process was in place but . . . and I will be talking about some of the comments I made a few years ago and what got us to this point, some of the concerns, and why we are where we're at the point we are today. And I think it's an important one to take some time to get my comments on record, and I'll elaborate why that is so critical in a few minutes. But this is a significant piece of legislation, and I will talk more specifically about some of the parts as we get going further.

But I do want to take a minute right off the bat to talk briefly about the minister's comments. I always like to do that, because it's an important way to frame the conversation. First, what does the minister say in the second reading? People may, at home who are watching this, may not know what the minister said in his second reading speech. It's very, very important, because the second reading speech by a minister really

sets the tone.

And from my own experience, I was instructed that my comments were to be as straightforward and to the point and mean what I say, because they could be later used in either a court setting or some setting. Because these are the things that people will use for further interpretation of what the bill is. It's an interpretive tool for the bill.

So Bill 174, the minister — and this was back on December 8th — got up and talked about *The Registered Teachers Act*, and it will create a new regulatory body for teachers in Saskatchewan. And he says, I quote, “I think it's safe to say that the government has done its homework on this file.”

Well I do have some questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we will find out whether it's done its homework when we get to committee. Because as I will go through my points here, this is not just a . . . We were worried when this was first launched that it was a knee-jerk reaction to a news story, and the government wanted to get it off its plate as quickly as possible. Some time has passed, and I think a lot of people have done their homework, but the proof will be in the pudding in committee when we ask some questions about what's the future of this, what's the future of that. So I will talk more about that in a minute when we talk about the context going back to the spring of 2013, two years ago.

So he talks about how the minister is responsible for certifying all Saskatchewan teachers. Fair enough. And then he talks about how the STF is responsible for disciplinary matters and how this is something that needs to be looked after.

Disciplinary processes concerning administrators, such as directors of education, superintendents, are held by the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents. Meanwhile teachers at independent schools, custody care facilities, and post-secondary institutions fall under disciplinary responsibility of the ministry.

So it'll be interesting to see when we talk about post-secondary institutions, are teachers there . . . Now quite often we might refer to them as sessional lecturers. We might refer to them as professors. Are they part of this? I'm not sure. So he's sort of implying that maybe they might be, you know.

But I guess this is the thing. This is the thing. And I've always been very clear about this, you know, and very proud of it, that many people will call themselves educators, many people will call themselves an educator, but you need to have a licence to teach. You need to have a licence to teach, and that licence is the one that you get after completing your training and you apply to the Government of Saskatchewan and the Minister of Education — very, very, important difference. So to be a professor or a sessional lecturer, you don't need a licence; you don't need to be registered. So there will be some questions about that comment that he has there. Who does he see at post-secondary institutions? What does that mean?

[So] *The Registered Teachers Act* will consolidate the responsibilities for teacher certification and discipline within one legislative framework by which the new Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board . . .

And that will be governed. Now it talks about the overview first; the establishment of the board, second; the establishment of the nine-person board of directors, including seven registered teachers and two members of the public. And now it will be interesting, and I may come back to this, but right off the start, I think this is interesting that we have a board, a nine-person board of directors, and there are seven registered teachers and two members of the public. But you know, when we take a look at who makes up the seven, there is no mention of the universities. And I'm curious about why, why that is, what was the reasoning for that. And we'll talk more when we get into the Act, who is on the board and who makes up the board.

But I'm curious about why is there not . . . There used to be a really strong relationship between the University of Saskatchewan, and it used to be sort of the group that would help a minister or lead change in education for teachers, School Boards Association, the government. Those were the three key ones. But there was also the universities very much involved in the whole thing. And now we see the universities not being included in the development, or in this board. So I'm just wondering, how do they feel? Have we talked to the deans of Education to say, so even if you are providing the service, and we'll tell you what service we need, the deans have no role. They cannot appoint anybody to this board. So I'm wondering how . . . Maybe they'll be on some committees. Maybe they're happy with this. But the minister's unclear about this for sure.

Thirdly, it prescribes the duty of the SPTRB [Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board] to serve and protect the public and to exercise its powers and to discharge its responsibility in the public interest.

Now I just want to stop there for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He talked about, "to serve and protect the public." You know, one of the things, and I'll be quoted here later, and I do appreciate that the minister does take a look at what I say. Even in question period today, he quoted me but he had the wrong year. He was out by a decade. The quote was from 2012, not 2002. But at any rate it was a good quote and he was accurate, just the timing. But at any rate, he quotes me.

The question is this, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker: when he quoted me, I talked about how the children were number one, that they were what we were really wanting to make sure. And he says, it prescribes the duties to serve and protect the public. Yes, that's important. The public interest is very much present; it's paramount. But the very most important issue is safety of the student and the child. And he doesn't really talk about that in his comments. He talks about the public interest. So I have to say I have some concerns about that, because where are the children in this debate? Now he'll quote me later on in his comments, and well I'll continue this discussion.

Fourthly, it prescribes the objectives of SPTRB, which are to establish and administer the professional certification and standards of professional conduct and

competence of teachers for the purpose of serving and protecting the public.

This is what I was getting at earlier, and I'll read from a comment, an article from *The StarPhoenix* on May 31st, 2013, "Province will change teacher training." Now it was one of the many things that were put on hold, and I'll get back to that because some of the professors at the University of Saskatchewan were contacting me. At the time I was critic for Education. I am no longer; I am the associate critic for Education. But I had been approached about some alarming changes that were coming down the line. And this is why I think it's really important to have people from the university on this board, but I see that they're omitted and so I'm curious about that. And that will be one of our questions in committee: what is the role of the teacher colleges, the Faculty of Education, the College of Education, when it comes to the SPTRB? What's their role?

An Hon. Member: We have an answer.

Mr. Forbes: Well I'm waiting for committee. If it's not here, it's not here. It's not here, but we will get into that. A debate may break out on the floor here. And this is the question I have. And I will quote from the article, and if the minister does want a copy of the article, I'll make sure he will get the article. Because it is a couple of years old, and I know the professor will appreciate the review of that.

But he goes on to talk about, fifthly, it grants the board the authority to issue teachers' certificates. And as I said, that's a hugely significant piece in terms of, you know, when you've gone to college and you've taken your teacher training, and when you get your certificate, it's a pretty, pretty special day. And when I received mine in I guess it would have been in the spring of 1982 . . . It was 1982, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm proud to say that on our side of the House, one-third of our caucus are teachers and have a teacher's licence, and are active. And that's really important. I think that's hugely important. So we really appreciate the fact that we've known what it's like to get that teacher's certificate in the mail, and what it really means.

Sixth, it grants the regulatory board responsibility for intake, investigation, hearing on the professional misconduct and incompetence, and that's hugely, hugely significant. And that really was in many ways the driving force of what happened in the spring of 2013 that caused the minister at the time to start these changes.

Now it's interesting. It talks about the transition committee and it was interesting that you did have on people from the ministry, from the administrators and superintendents, the School Boards Association, FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations]. And again I don't see the universities. Not that I'm . . . You know what happens when you get nitpicky on this. You tend to focus on some things that are glaring in their omission, but I don't see the universities. I don't see the college or the faculties of Education. And we'll have to talk to them and say, so what do you think about this because you're an active participant? They're going to be the groups who are going to be delivering the training of teachers. They're the ones who are going to be working in the field to make sure teachers are great teachers. And yet for some strange reason, they're not part of the conversation

at this point.

Now it's interesting. And this I do have to share with the House here, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, we also know that members opposite have taken a keen interest in this. I'm going to quote from *The StarPhoenix* article dated June 29th, 2013. The article stated that the member for Saskatoon Centre would, and I quote, ". . . also spend the summer doing extra homework on teacher regulation practices across Canada." Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from the members opposite about everything they found. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite also stated in the . . .

Well I just want to stop there, that I did actually do some homework here and I'm going to be quoting extensively from that today because when I have the invitation to talk about educational matters, I do take it up . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We'll be looking forward to that. We'll be looking forward to that. Will it be random? I hope it's not just a random inspection but he's listening fully and completely to every word I'm saying. But he also says, and this is what I want to get back to earlier. He's quoting me:

We want to make sure that the public and parents and colleagues in the profession, everyone has full confidence in the system and the process. That means it's transparent, it's accountable, but it's also fair, and that student safety is the No. 1 issue here.

And he goes on and says he couldn't agree more, and I couldn't agree more. I stand by those words quite . . . I have absolutely no problem, and I appreciate people quote me here because that I really mean what I said, and that's really, truly the case.

And this was what we get back to the public interest. Clearly when you have public schools, there is a huge public interest to serve. But when it comes to safety in our schools, it's really important that we make sure safety of the child, the student is number one, and we are all, we are all on the same base of that. So I just find it interesting that when the minister talked about public interest he didn't put, didn't state the issue about student safety. And I think that's hugely, hugely important.

This is a interesting quote from the minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He goes on and he says, "We know that the member from Saskatoon Centre has admitted to doing a bit of nitpicking at times when he tries to find a reason to criticize some government bills." Now I do have to say it's passing strange that a lawyer would say to a teacher that I'm being nitpicky. I find this really odd, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I'm the nitpicky person, and he's the lawyer and he's the minister. Hey, it's just me doing my job, and this is what I get paid to be, paid to do, and so I will be nitpicky today. So bear with me as I go through these issues. But I had to say that it was an odd comment that I would be . . . A lawyer calling a teacher nitpicky — now that is something else.

So anyways he goes on and he talks about . . . But you know what? And he talks about the different supports and different things like that. And I think that's fair enough, but as I

said though the . . . And it's good to see that he's got momentum behind this Act. We're glad to see that the STF is saying positive things about this and we're glad to see the Saskatchewan School Boards Association is, as the quote says, ". . . encouraged by the movement toward increased transparency and clarity." And that's strong, and I think that's fair enough.

But as I said, that the thing that I thought rather odd is where are, where are the universities on this? What are the universities saying about this? And I don't have an expectation either way that they would be either positive or negative. I'd just be very interested in hearing what their comments are, and so we'll be asking them for that. And as I said, I'll refer to one of their articles that they had that talked about some of the concerns.

But I do want to say that the minister was quoting from an article in *The StarPhoenix* when he was quoting me, and that's fair enough. The article was from June 29, 2013. I don't know why they assigned myself homework on the very last day of school. It sounds like summer school to me, and I don't think that's always a great idea. But it was an important thing to be doing.

And the article is "Regulation of Saskatchewan teachers to undergo changes." And that was by the previous minister at the time. And I was quoted:

NDP Opposition education critic David Forbes said that the party will also spend the summer doing extra homework on teacher regulation practices across Canada.

"We want to make sure that the public and parents, and colleagues in the profession, everyone has full confidence in the system and the process," Forbes said.

[But this is important.] "That means it's transparent, it's accountable, but it's also fair, and that student safety is the No. 1 issue here."

So that's that. But then the article goes on, and I think this is very important for the minister to hear and others who thought I may be repeating myself. I haven't said this, but I will say it probably a few times before the end of the day because this is the irony. This is the problem with this government. And I go on to say, and I quote, I quote the article:

The questions the ministry documents raised [and what I say] "have really highlighted some areas that we really need to take a look at," Forbes said. "I think that's a good thing. I think in terms of transparency and accountability, there are real questions. We're going to take a good look at this. Clearly, it needs to be reviewed."

What worries Forbes is the government making any changes in haste.

The Saskatchewan Party government "has a penchant for making announcements that catch everybody off guard," Forbes said. He pointed to changes made with

little consultation, such as a required minimum number of instruction hours in the school year, mandating classes begin after Labour Day and introducing a new standardized testing program.

And I'm quoted as saying:

“What I also see happening in Saskatchewan is a real situation where we see relationships between the educational partners becoming very fractured. I don’t think that’s helpful to anybody, said Forbes, who worked as a teacher for 18 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are. Here we are in this House debating. Just before me in the House, we were debating another bill that was *The Education Amendment Act*, talking about the school year calendar and how they rushed into that. Oops, now here we are getting that fixed up after those folks over there couldn’t figure out the calendar. And here we have, we’ve just resolved a contract that has left many teachers with a lot of questions because they couldn’t vote on it, but one of the things that they’re working on is a number of instructional hours that came out of . . . Where’d that come out of? And now we’re resolving that problem.

So we have a whole list of problems in education. And of course, and we can make light of the fact of standardized testing, but I tell you in the spring of 2013, there was a lot of, a lot of concerns. And maybe I’m being nitpicky but I remember one question in estimates — that wasn’t this minister, but the former minister — when I asked for a list of books of what proved the worth of standardized testing. And they gave me a list, and then I asked the obvious question that any teacher would ask: did you read the books? And the resounding answer was no, we haven’t read the books. We hadn’t read them. And I was looking at these . . . the minister, I couldn’t believe this. They had a list of 10 books that I should read but I said, well you’ve brought them to me. Have you read them? No they hadn’t.

And so the government backing off of standardized testing and for very good reason and particularly, and I have to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I actually have read them. That was the summer. I have read them. I have read them. It has been a couple of years. I won’t take the test on them today, but I did want to read them because I wanted to understand, and I wanted to understand what their thinking was. And of course that was the irony, that was the irony. You don’t go there because you never know when you go down that kind of rabbit hole what will happen.

But you know, it was interesting when I shared that list, when I shared that list with some university professors who were familiar with the literature on standardized testing and appropriate measurement, that they were saying, well these books, I mean, they don’t even support standardized testing. Many of them don’t. And so I had to have a good look through them, but clearly if I’m being nitpicky when I ask questions like, have you read the books, have you read the material, I think that’s really important.

Again I am going to back to the universities on this and saying, so where are they on all

of this. Because you know, I do have to thank the university and some of the faculty members who've brought forward their concerns about standardized testing and clearly outlined the problems that they saw. And that's their role in our community, and we look forward to working with those folks because they're the academics and they know.

They're the ones who are writing these books, these articles on how to test children, how to measure academic growth. And yet I see them not being included. I see them not being included.

So this article that I'm quoting from was June of 2013, but that wasn't the only thing that was happening in that spring. Of course the whole standardized testing fiasco was happening, and the government at that time was still hanging on tight. And it wasn't until the next year that we heard the brakes were being put on on that change.

But the one that I think, and this is the one that I will, after I'm finished speaking, send over to the minister because I'm not sure if he's aware of this, if he's done his homework on this one. But this is the debate and the article is from Friday, May 31st, 2013. And this is why we do debates like this. And I know the professor will be . . . I hope she'll appreciate the opportunity to have this quote on the record because she had written me several times and had felt really stonewalled in 2013 about the process.

The professor was Bev Brenna, and the article is "Province will change teacher training." And this again was by Janet French who was doing an outstanding job of reporting on educational matters. And unfortunately, you know, it's one of the things I do miss in our newspapers when people do get into detail, do get into detail of subject matters and really bring up all the points. So she talks about, Janet French writes:

The debate about whether school teachers should be generalists or specialists is resurfacing as the Saskatchewan government moves to change the education requirements for teachers.

Now I understand this has been put on hold, but as soon as this Act is put into place and put into action, that this will start up again. And I would really encourage and will be talking in committee about what are the plans around teacher certification. And I will go back to talk about this in the parts of the Act that empower different bylaws.

But I do want to read some significant parts of this:

After years of discussion and consultation with the four . . . postsecondary institutions that train teachers, a provincial board has drafted new requirements for teachers to be certified in the province.

So this is back in the spring of 2013 that there were new requirements that were drafted. And I quote:

"The argument of generalists versus specialists has been going in education circles for years," says Prof. James McNinch, dean of education at the University of Regina. "This is the one hot spot in these recommendations."

So it talks about:

In charge of setting the requirements for teachers to teach in Saskatchewan is a Teacher Education, Certification and Classification board. Members of that board had earlier commissioned a report which recommended changes to the education requirements for Saskatchewan teachers, said Trevor Smith, the board's secretariat and the man who oversees individual teachers' certification.

The TECC board is now in its fifth draft of recommendations, which Smith says he hopes will go to the Minister of Education this fall for approval.

And of course all things went off the rails when they decided to get Dr. Kendel involved and his report. And so this is really important. You know, and when he talks about if the minister does approve them, it could be four years before the changes take effect because there are current students who are already enrolled in the teacher education programs and they need to finish their classes. But it does take time to implement the new certification requirements.

Now this is what is interesting: "Although the TECC board did talk to the universities, McNinch said it wasn't soon or thorough enough."

And so that's why I'm flagging the universities. They play an integral part because if they're the foundation. They're the foundation. If you're not talking to the universities or having them involved in an integral way . . . maybe they are, but I haven't evidence of that.

It goes on and I quote the article:

Changing certification requirements, like the government's decision to start school after Labour Day [Here we are again talking about that.] and expand standardized testing, "have all been pushed without the kind of dialogue I think we would expect," McNinch said.

So here we are two years later, we're still talking about standardized testing and starting school after Labour Day. And we have that amendment, that Act before us that is clearing that up.

He goes on to say, "There's a sense of them listening to their constituents rather than the educational stakeholders. It's a shift in how things are done, and I regret that."

So this is the thing. Now maybe they have been consulting, and we'll find out in committee, but we want to make sure that circle of stakeholders include the universities. It's very important that we have strong faculty, a strong Faculty of Education, a strong College of Education. I'm a product of that at the University of Regina. My colleague is a product of the University of Saskatchewan, I believe the College of Education there. And so we were well grounded in this and we really do think this is an important thing.

It goes on to talk about:

The board wants to extend teacher candidates' minimum time spent as a student teacher to 10 from eight weeks. [That might be fair enough.] It would also require both elementary and high school teachers to amass 24 credits in teaching instruction — like lesson planning, the use of technology [that type of stuff] . . .

Instead of a “major” and “minor” teaching area [and that’s probably what we’re all familiar with] high school teachers would [now] be asked to take classes in three teaching areas.

So it goes on to talk about how the rationale behind this, and why this might be a good idea. But again what we really need to do is make sure that we’re involving all the stakeholders. Now McNinch, and I quote again:

McNinch said some high school teachers will argue knowledge of a subject is critical to success. However, good teaching is also about engaging and encouraging students and sparking their interest, he said.

So this is really, really interesting. Now he also points out — and I think this is Trevor Smith, I think that’s who is saying this — talks about some of the issues when we have people coming from Ontario who want to teach in Saskatchewan, but they have spent less time in the classroom than we have. I’m not sure how that works out.

But I do want to get to the point that professor Beverley Brenna . . . and I met with her and this is why I’m bringing this up, because I think it is a critical piece and one that we will be following very closely:

Teachers will have to study how to teach English, math, science, social studies but not for a set number of credits . . .

That suggestion troubles Beverley Brenna, a curriculum studies professor in the University of Saskatchewan’s College of Education. Brenna points to studies that demonstrate the benefits teachers get from two university-level classes in methods of teaching language arts as compared to one . . .

So what they’re saying is they want to go from two classes of language arts instruction down to one, and she’s really worried about that because we know, we know — and I’m from the Saskatoon Public board, and we’ve done an awful lot of work in literacy — that if we start to weaken our language arts component then we have a real problem.

So this is a quote from Bev Brenna:

“I challenge the government to provide evidence supporting the opposite — that offering no fully developed courses explicitly designed to teach ELA is a practice somehow beneficial in terms of a teacher education . . . [program],” Brenna said in an email.

And it goes on to talk about, “Brenna is encouraging people to contact their MLA and the minister of education before the changes take . . . [place].” And I would finish with this:

“I would advise that the Ministry of Education consider fully all potential challenges that might emerge as a result of not delineating a minimum number of semester hours in English language arts methods training,” she writes.

Clearly here’s somebody who knows a little bit about teacher training and what works in our classrooms and how we can make sure they continue to achieve success. And we know one of the areas we have great concern about is really around literacy, and this is one that I really hope . . . And I will get it to the minister when I’m finished teaching because I think it’s a very important article that talks about what happens next. What happens next?

We can all agree to this Act, and we all recognize that within the Act there are bylaws, and the power’s the bylaws. But we see that the universities may not be as actively involved as they once were, and what does it mean in terms of . . . We know that the spring of 2013, there were many, many things afoot, many things afoot that caused teachers a lot of concerns.

One of the things I was surprised that the minister did not refer to was . . . And I just want to thank Dr. Dennis Kendel for his work. His report was very thorough, helped a lot, I think it helped a lot of people and I think helped the department. It was a good foundation for people to start to have a conversation about where do we want to go, and he did an outstanding job on this. And I was surprised that . . . And I will acknowledge the good work that Dr. Dennis Kendel did on this. I was concerned that how, you know, as a teacher that we often think only a teacher understands, but I think that he really grasped the issues at hand.

I just want to read a couple lines from the introduction because I think this is really, really important. What he writes, and I quote:

You might then assume that this report is all about teachers. It’s not. While it refers to teachers many times, it’s really all about students. How we regulate teachers is critically important to students. The decision that the Government of Saskatchewan ultimately makes about the best way to regulate teachers must, above all else, protect and advance the interests of students. Simply put, it must work for students.

I think this is the gist of the whole thing, isn’t it? It must work for students so students can reach their full potential, but they can do it in a safe, safe environment. He wrote a very thorough review, and I do want to thank Dr. Kendel for his work because while . . . And it’s always a hard thing when change is driven by newspaper articles or it appears to be, that people do feel threatened, do feel misunderstood, and we know that. We’ve all had experience in this House, on both sides of the House, where we felt our points weren’t as well taken in the media as they might have been, and our points may lead us to be misunderstood. But the fact of the matter is — as we both agree, and I think everybody has a common thing — that this must work for students. And that’s hugely, hugely important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course the STF did their work, and they talked about public assurance, professional commitment, teacher quality, and it talks about their work and how this is important. And you know, one of the things about the STF is that they always do such thorough, thorough work in terms of understanding how we can support teachers so that they can do the best for students and how deeply committed they are for student success. But they know one thing. If you're going to have great students, great kids, you've got to have great teachers and great schools. They go together hand in glove; you can't have one without the other. And so an investment in teachers really pays off with our children, and I think that's what we all look for. And I appreciate the frame about public assurance, and I think that's really important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, the minister did challenge me to share my homework, and this is what I . . . I won't read my whole report here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I did ask. I wanted to get a sense, an environmental scan of what were the issues. What were the concerns and emerging issues in public education in Saskatchewan?

And of course, you know, it was interesting because when we've talked about education, it's hugely important we recognize the changing nature of our schools — very, very different. Of course we've talked at length, and we'll wait. The Finance minister, as he said, just a couple more weeks until budget time, and we'll find out if in fact these folks on the government side will step up and support schools or really what are their priorities.

And so we talk about how, you know, we think this is really important, and yet we know schools are crowded, overcrowded. We've seen, we've heard, and I know that the whole cabinet were there at SUMA to hear from a parent in Gerald, and I think if they're . . . It's just representative of more and more schools in Saskatchewan where we know there's a \$1.5 billion infrastructure deficit that this government is putting off to local boards and saying, you deal with it; it's not our problem.

And I know for example in my own school division, I know they like to brag it up, but you know, in Gerald their school was right at the top of the list and now they find it down at the bottom, no. 100. And I think of a school in my own neighbourhood — and if I'm not mistaken the Minister of Education may have attended it at one time but grew up close to it — Pleasant Hill School who's dealing with asbestos. I had the privilege of being there last fall for their 100th birthday. Still it's great to have a birthday, but they're dealing with asbestos and that's the issue.

So we talk about students from:

. . . the most connected generation in history with remarkable access to information. They are growing up in an interconnected world and with a keen awareness of global issues including: climate change, poverty and a wide variety of political and social issues.

The current generation of students is also characterized by the disparity . . . [by] those who have access to financial resources, technology and post-secondary education and those who [simply] do not.

And this is the situation we have. “Tapscott (2009) described this as two generations of the same age, ‘one thriving and one failing.’”

And we see this in Saskatchewan where:

... this disparity is most visible between the province’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. In both Saskatoon and Regina almost half of all Aboriginal people are living below the low income cut off as reported by Statistics Canada in 2006.

This is our world. We can say somewhere else there’s a generation growing up with two worlds, one thriving and one failing. It’s the reality unfortunately here in Saskatchewan, and we know this government has commissioned many reports on this and yet the action is just not there, just not there. We need to make sure that we step up to the plate on this. We cannot have a situation where we have a generation where one-half . . . where there’s one group failing and one group thriving.

Our population is experiencing incredible growth, and we often hear this. We’ll talk about the baby boom that’s happening in our communities with the new immigrants coming to Saskatchewan. This is all a good thing, but this brings new challenges. And yet we see a government that’s unprepared to really make the investments that are necessary so kids have a great start. And that’s all kids. That’s all kids. And so when we have a report like this and leading to Bill No. 174, yes, when we think about this, we have to think about the context in terms of what’s happening in our province here.

This really talks about what we have to do in terms of how we move forward. One of the things I want to talk a little bit about, and this is one of the things I did that spring is I asked kids, so what are their concerns? What are kids worried about? What are kids worried about at school? You know, as I said, it’s a great, wonderful thing. It’s a wonderful thing . . . And I appreciate that the members over there probably don’t want to hear what kids want to talk about. They don’t want to hear, especially that member from Moose Jaw who probably hasn’t talked to a kid in a long, long time. I don’t know if that’s . . . But I’ve got to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they get loud when they don’t want to hear what kids want to talk about.

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Let me read the first line of my report: “More and more young people are choosing to remain in Saskatchewan.” And yet those guys are ready to shout and shout as if . . . We think that’s a good thing. Now he thinks that he just wants to yell from his seat, the member from Moose Jaw, ready to jump up. He should listen. He should just sit back and listen. He should just relax a bit and listen to the speech at hand, and watch his heckling. He can heckle afterwards. I always enjoy a good heckle, but maybe after the fact because I’d like to do my speech.

But here we are. We agree and kids agree that they want to remain here in Saskatchewan. That’s a wonderful thing. That’s a wonderful thing. But they have some concerns and hopes for their future that are important to consider in terms of any educational reform. Students are concerned about their choices and the accessibility of quality education at

both the secondary and post-secondary level and the availability of quality employment once they leave the education system. So here you have . . . They're very wise. They're saying yes, we want to stay here but we want to make sure we have the best schools, the best high schools, the best universities, the post-secondary learning situations, and they want to have a good job. They want to have good jobs.

Here are some of the concerns that they've talked about. Their concerns were about the cost of housing. They have a concern about that. They are very aware of what the cost of housing is in Saskatchewan and what an impact that has on their choice to stay here in Saskatchewan. Now this is a challenge because we know rents are unaffordable. They are high and high school kids know that. They know that, and they want to make sure post-secondary schooling is affordable.

But many students have also expressed concerns about social equity within their community and identified specific concerns about the level of gang activity and crime as a product of social inequality and systemic racism. And, Mr. Speaker, no truer words. This is exactly their concerns that they see in their schools and on their streets, in the malls and main streets. They're worried about gangs. They are worried about systemic racism. These are real concerns, and we have to make sure we step up to the plate as a government.

The students raised concerns about the infrastructure within their community including access to reliable public transit, and they also raised concerns regarding the environment and access to sport and leisure facilities. It's great that they're concerned about the environment as well because as a generation, we're not doing a great job of how we're leaving this world. And I think that we should listen to these kids and what they hope for.

You know, I asked them, and this is something I would do, is what are your hopes? What are your fears? What are your positives? What are your negatives? What are the positive things that they felt about their community? They were positive about the social fabric of their community. They enjoyed its freedoms, opportunities, and cultural diversity, which is a great thing when you think about how diverse our communities are getting to be here in Saskatchewan. They see that as a positive. They don't see that as a negative. And they worry about the systemic racism that may be a hangover from our generation, but from their generation they're willing to embrace cultural diversity. So that's really important.

Several students reference their strong family connections and hope they continue to live and eventually work in their communities, and how they would like to meet their future aspirations and remain in Saskatchewan. And the challenge though is for us to, as legislators and policy-makers, to capitalize on that positive sentiment. They want to be here, but we have to make sure we have the best schools for them. And these are the kind of hopes and fears they have.

So what are the trends affecting teachers? We talked about teacher qualifications and salary. I talked at length about teacher qualifications; that's a huge issue. This was done in the spring of 2013 when they were just about to go into contract negotiations. Here we are in March of 2015, when that contract is just actually wrapping up. So it'd be

interesting to have . . . as we look back on the past two years for that.

Now interestingly, this is what was written at the time:

The Ministry of Education must also work with the professional organization of teachers in Saskatchewan, the STF and the provincial teacher education programs based out of both the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) and the University of Regina (U of R) to develop high quality programs for teacher training that recruit the best possible teacher candidates.

And that's why I'm concerned about this, this piece of legislation. And where are the universities in this? We used to have them as a key stakeholder, particularly when we came to teacher training and teacher recruitment, and we're kind of leaving that out. So now, "A provincial round table on teacher training and professionalism may be useful to create a public dialogue on this topic."

Go on to talk . . . another teacher concerned with student contact time which talked of retention of new teachers, and of course that would have an impact on this bill before us at hand. Standardized testing, again we continue to talk at length about that. And curricular changes, and again this is the one that we come back and we talk about the changes to the curriculum and how the rolling out . . . and I just quote:

The rolling out of new curriculum in Saskatchewan has been done without the required attention to teacher training and professional development. While each subject curriculum is unique and exceptions are bound to appear, overall the new Saskatchewan curriculum has been well developed so far.

But what we need to do is make sure we engage teachers and make sure we engage those who have . . . that are professional and the academic world in this area as well.

So my report writes:

Saskatchewanians believe that great teachers make for great schools. This belief can sometimes be translated into the . . . [belief] that if we can just get rid of the "bad teachers" we can "fix" the schools. What is more important is creating an educational environment that encourages collaboration and improved teaching by all teachers. While strong teachers are important to the success of any educational system, greater equity for their students will ultimately have a greater impact on the individual outcomes [for] . . . students . . .

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on, and I don't mean to read the whole report. But the ministers did challenge me when I said I was going to do my homework this summer, and I hope I demonstrated that I did do some homework that summer.

And so I just want to say that this is an important piece of legislation, and I think that when we look at the Act itself and we look at the . . . I just want to look at section 6 when we talk about the directors and who will be on the board. Section 6:

(2) The board of directors consists of:

- (a) the following members appointed or elected in accordance with the bylaws:
 - (i) three members appointed or elected by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation;
 - (ii) one member appointed or elected by the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents;
- (b) three members appointed by the minister, only one . . . may be a member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; and
- (c) two members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council pursuant to section 7.

So again just to be clear that there's no reference to the two universities, and I feel that's a big gap, and why have they been left out? I think that again as we talk about teacher training, and one part of this new piece of legislation which is so important is the protection of children and the disciplinary manner. But when we talk about teacher certification, teacher recruitment, teacher training, clearly the universities will have something to say about that. And they are not part of this.

And just to underline the section about how we can, you know, the section about bylaws and how bylaws come about, and the one that I find very interesting is section 2, section 16(2)(l) prescribing the procedures of . . .

- (p) setting standards regarding the manner and method of practice of teachers;
- (q) prescribing procedures . . .
- (r) establishing categories of certification and registration and prescribing the rights and privileges of each category;
- (s) respecting the teacher education programs required to be successfully completed for the purposes of certification pursuant to this Act;

So this is something, and I keep coming back to. This is hugely, hugely important. If we're going to have great schools we have to have great teachers, and for that they have to be, their programs have to be the very best. And to make sure that happens, we have to have full consultation with the appropriate groups.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will have a lot of questions to the minister on this bill. And I know members will have a lot of questions, a lot to say about this Act in the days ahead. We are looking forward to it, and it is good to see the STF, the school boards on side, and that some sense of collaboration is starting to appear.

But we don't see the whole picture, and as I said, we'll be having a lot of questions for the minister on this — especially in terms of the universities and the role of the universities. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debates now on Bill No. 174, *An Act respecting the Regulation of Teachers and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. Thank you very much.