



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

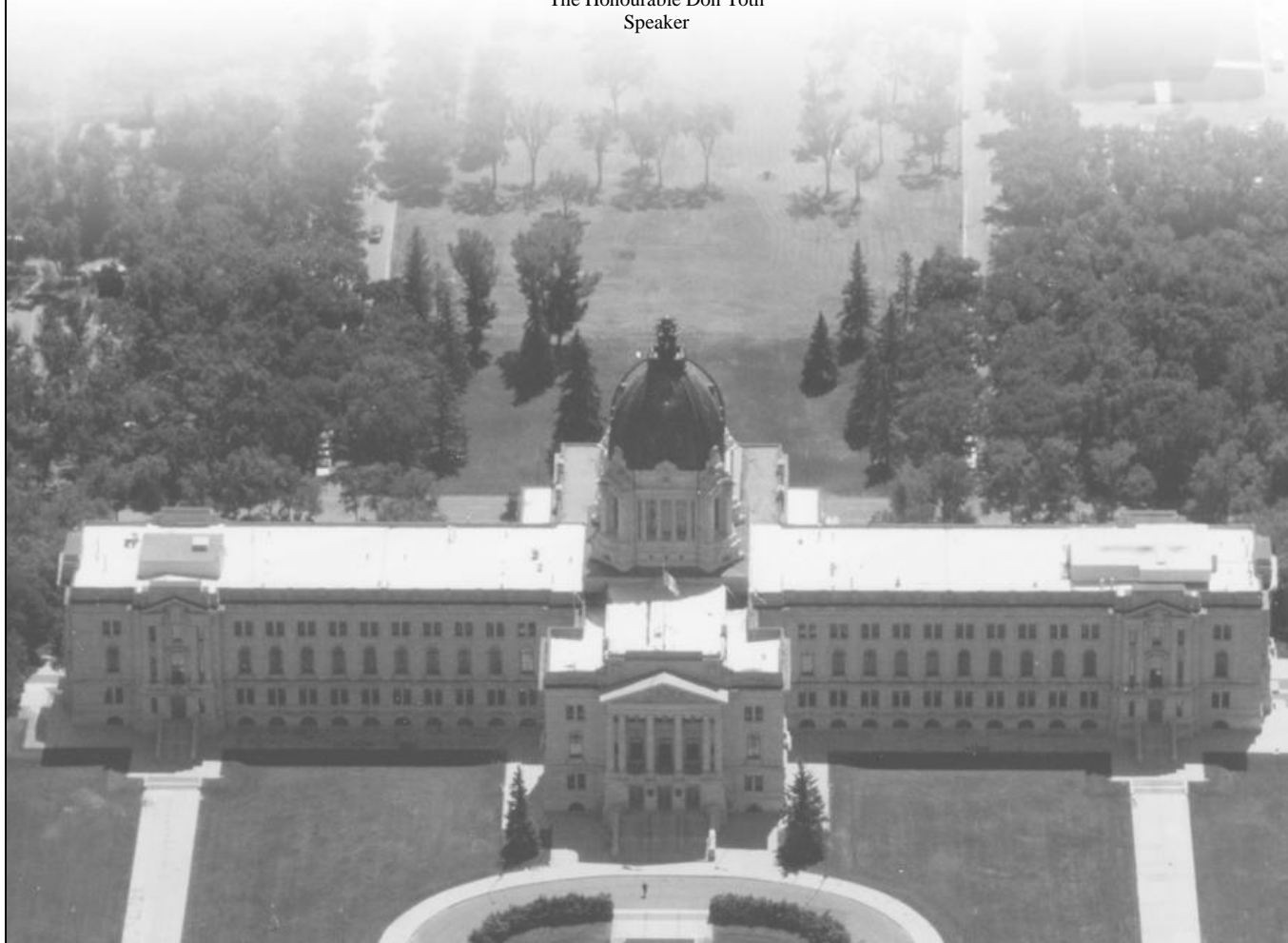
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Dwain Lingenfelter

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Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
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Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
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Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a number of guests seated in your gallery, a number of chiropractors as well as, I think, some of their patients, as well as one that's seated on the floor who happens to be my neighbour. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like . . . And maybe a particular mention to the chiropractic association's president, Shane Taylor, who's seated in the gallery. I'd just like all members of the House to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly. I'm sure there'll be a little more discussion on the services that they provide as we go through the day. Thank you.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add my welcome to the chiropractors of the province, many of whom are in the gallery today, and particularly to Dr. Shane Taylor, the president of the Chiropractors' Associations of Saskatchewan and Jim Stewart, their executive director.

Many people in the gallery today are patients who use chiropractic care and they've come here to express their concern about the government's proposed de-insuring of chiropractic care. They also have come to present on behalf of many people in the province, thousands and thousands and thousands, I believe, signatures on petitions. So I'm looking forward to seeing that after question period. And welcome to the gallery.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and pleasure on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and all of the people in Saskatchewan to welcome a very distinguished visitor seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're honoured today to have in the province of Saskatchewan the ambassador to Canada from Italy, Mr. Andrea Meloni. Mr. Meloni is on his first official visit to the province of Saskatchewan, a very short visit, about a day and a half, I understand, and I hope that he has had a great opportunity to understand our terrific province and what goes on in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of being in Italy for the first time last fall for a couple of weeks, and it was a tremendous honour for me to see such great history and such a great country. I also understand that Italy, as far as one of the leaders in the European Union, has moved into the top 10, one of the

top 10 countries of doing business with the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Meloni, we want to welcome you to the Assembly, and we wish you well in your stay as the ambassador to Canada from Italy. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to add the loyal opposition's welcome to the ambassador to Saskatchewan. We know the contributions that the Italian-Canadian citizens of our community have provided in Saskatchewan but in Canada as a whole. We also are all going to be watching Italy very closely in the coming weeks as we know that that's where the world championship for curling is going to take place. And so we'll be seeing at least one part of Italy in a more focused way. But welcome to Saskatchewan, and we very much appreciate the role that you can play in our country. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose, the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly it's my pleasure to introduce in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a number of people who are here today representing area transportation planning committees. They were here for a signing ceremony, which we just finished a few minutes ago, to formalize the relationship between their groups and the provincial government. I'd like to acknowledge all the good work they've done helping us prioritize highway projects in the past and going into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just ask each of them to just wave as I mention them: Richard Porter from the north central committee and also representing SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] today; Larry Sommerfeld from the central area committee; Glen Strong from the Athabasca Basin committee; Merv Kryzanowski from the north east committee; Barry Opekokew from the north-north west committee; Carl Lentowicz from the north-north east committee; Don Kirby from the south central committee; Redge Nelson from the south east committee; Morgan Powell from the south west committee; Ken Ogle from the west central committee; Gary Kayter from the east central committee; and Sharon Armstrong, representing SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] today. I'd like to ask all my colleagues to please give them a warm welcome to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome our area transportation planning committee Chairs to the legislature today. And I know that they do great work out there. There's nothing like getting information from the people who are on the front lines, and these folks certainly are, throughout our great province of ours, they are the front-line troops.

And I'd also like to say a special welcome to Mr. Glen Strong. I

had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Strong way up north a couple of years ago on a very rough highway but I'm sure it's much improved since then. So I'd ask all the members to welcome our guests here today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena, the Minister for Crown Investments.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all my colleagues in the House it's my pleasure to introduce the following guests seated in the government gallery today. We have Marilyn Braun-Pollon, vice-president of Saskatchewan and agribusiness of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Virginia Labbie, policy analyst for Saskatchewan and agribusiness of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Grant Bastedo, director of communications from Information Services Corporation; Bryan Burnett, vice-president of marketing and business development from Information Services Corporation.

They join with us today as I announce a new and exciting initiative that's going to take place in ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan]. I'll be making a ministerial statement right after question period.

I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming these guests to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join in the welcoming of the people involved with the highway transportation committee, and in particular I want to welcome Sharon Armstrong and Mr. Porter as well. I understand that these two folks have been involved with this process for a long, long time. And I also want to welcome, from the Athabasca Basin, Mr. Strong, and also from our region, Mr. Opekokew.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

And I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, as the next Highways minister, we're going to do a lot more with this group. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you 12 of Saskatchewan's nearly 250 volunteer crop reporters. Mr. Speaker, these 12 crop reporters are being recognized today for their dedication and commitment to the Saskatchewan agriculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, eight of the crop reporters sitting in your gallery today are being recognized for 25 years of volunteer service. Four of the crop reporters are being recognized for 30 years of volunteer service.

Mr. Speaker, these crop reporters have volunteered their personal time during the crop season to collect information about the crop and forage development and moisture levels in their RMs [rural municipality]. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the crop report is to provide timely and accurate information about the development of Saskatchewan crops and forages to producers and the general public. I would ask the crop reporters being recognized for 25 years of service, and their spouses, to stand as I announce their names.

Irene and Derald Ahner of the RM of Big Stick. Both Derald and Irene are crop reporters. Allan Aitken from the RM of Eyebrow and his wife Sherry. Michael Gould from the RM of Enfield and his wife Marg. Darcy Kentel and his wife Laurie from the RM of Churchbridge in the great constituency of Melville-Saltcoats. Bernard Slugoski from the RM of Buchanan and his wife Marg. Vincent Weisner from the RM of Eye Hill and his wife Gwen. Lambert Wourms from the RM of Frenchman Butte and his wife Lillian and their grandson Michael.

Mr. Speaker, there are two other crop reporters who have dedicated 25 years of service but could not attend today, and they are Marion and Harvey Kelly of the RM of Round Valley.

Mr. Speaker, we also have with us today crop reporters who have provided 30 years of volunteer service. I would ask again to have them stand as I introduce them. They are: Bernard Cey of the RM of Reford and his wife Cheryl; Larry Kuntz of the RM of Buffalo and his wife Rita; David Thompson of the RM of Kellross and his wife Carole; and William Walter of the RM of Nipawin and his wife Elaine.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join with me in recognizing and thanking these crop reporters for their service and welcome them to their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition to welcome our guests, the crop reporters. It is so nice to see such a fine group of people that have worked and volunteered for so many years on behalf of all of Saskatchewan farmers and agribusiness, as I know, having been a former reader of the crop report. I used to read it weekly. I know how important it was to the agribusiness. I was working in another lifetime for what was then known as Sask Wheat Pool, but I know that the work that these crop reporters do is just phenomenally important to our province and to the people of the province.

In particular though, there are two that are known to me as they reside in a former ... well in the constituency that my grandmother once represented. It was then called Maple Creek constituency; now of course it's Cypress Hills. But I want to recognize my friends Irene and Derald Ahner in the gallery there. It's great to have you two and all of the other crop

reporters and I thank them on behalf of the official Leader of the Opposition and all of my colleagues. I thank you all for the work that you have done.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt, the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour today to stand and introduce a fabulous school group that are in the west gallery. There's 49 students from Bruno that are here with us today, from grades 6 to 9. They're accompanied with their teachers, Jeff Marshak and Corrinne Arnold, as well as some chaperones, Todd Borstmayer and Michelle Ebner. I hope they enjoy the proceedings and I'm looking forward to meeting with them later. So welcome, all of you, to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the legislature, I'd like to introduce a number of trade unionists in your gallery who have joined us today. Terry Parker, business manager for the Saskatchewan Building Trades Council. Gary Vieser is up there, business manager for the IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers]. Dallas Rogers is there, business manager for the Boilermakers. And Chuck Rudder there, business manager for the Heat and Frost Insulators union. I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to welcome these trade unionists to their Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake, the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce a friend of mine, the reeve of the RM of Meadow Lake, Mr. Ray Wilfing, who joins us today. And Ray is active on the area transportation planning committee with North Central Rail and all other organizations in northwestern Saskatchewan. So please join with me in welcoming Ray Wilfing to the Legislative Assembly.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't get guests from Cypress Hills into the legislature very often. It's a long distance to travel, so when they do arrive I like to welcome them and make sure that they feel welcomed to the Assembly.

And today I know that the Ahners have been recognized already. I appreciate their commitment to the crop insurance endeavours that they've participated in over the last number of years — Irene and Derald from the Maple Creek area.

And also I'd like to indicate my appreciation for Morgan Powell who is part of the transportation planning group that are here today. Morgan is the Chair of the south west transportation planning committee. He and I have become friends as a result of transportation issues. We talk frequently, and he's been a real

support for the undertakings of the ministry in the southwest part over the last number of years. So I'd like to recognize him as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, to this House, I would like to introduce again the mayor of Wynyard. I've worked many years with her, and she's worked many, many years to make the town of Wynyard what it is. And she's worked many years with different organizations such as the highways and such as municipal to do a lot of good work for this province. So again I would like to welcome Mayor Sharon Armstrong to her legislature today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to recognize someone who has already been introduced, Mr. Dave Thompson, one of the crop reporters who has done that work for some 30 years. I know a little bit about it; I took a short stint at it. But Dave is very active in his community. He had been the reeve of RM of Kelross for a number of years, is still a Lions Club member in the community of Kelliher. And it seems any time there's something happening in Kelliher you'll see Dave, along with his good wife, Carole.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize a constituent, Gary Kayter who has served many years on the area transportation assembly. And I'd like all members to welcome these people to their Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Before we move forward with presenting petitions, I would just like to not only extend an invitation to all of our guests, but also ask our guests to refrain from any further participation in any form in the debate on the floor of the Assembly. That would be appreciated. We really welcome you to your Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to present a petition in support of a middle school for Warman. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize the urgency of a middle school for the fast growing community of Warman.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have hundreds and hundreds of signatures throughout Warman and the people that want to support Warman, and there's a number of pages here that have the signatures. And people are really working hard to make sure this petition is being heard through our opposition caucus. And I so present.

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud today to rise to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned over the condition of our highways, in particular Highway 310. This petition states that the condition of 310 has deteriorated to the point where it's now a potential safety hazard for the residents who have to travel on that highway each and every day. Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to commit to providing the repairs to No. 310 Highway that the people of Saskatchewan need.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Ituna, Saskatchewan. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce a petition that was put together by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition. This petition is regarding the Saskatchewan scholarship fund that was promised as part of the Sask Party election platform in the last general election. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to implement the promised Saskatchewan scholarship fund.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this are from many places all around Regina and I noted, including one very familiar name, being Benjamin Crescent, Les Benjamin being a former MP [Member of Parliament]. But these petitions are from all over Regina, and I so present.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to rise and present a petition in support of people with autism. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to commit to providing a comprehensive provincial autism spectrum strategy that is based on proven best practice, evidence-based research, treatments, and programming; and given the complexity of the disorder and its treatments, that individualized funding concept be adapted for parents and guardians of autistic individuals.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Tisdale, Gull Lake, Arborfield, and Carmichael. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Now thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. We know that workers in community-based organizations in Saskatchewan have traditionally been underpaid and many continue to earn poverty level wages and, in fact, research shows that they earn about 8 to \$10 per hour less than employees performing work of equal value in government departments.

Now I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the development and implementation of a multi-year funding plan to ensure that CBO workers achieve wage equity with employees who perform work of equal value in government departments.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these folks come from the good city of Regina. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of a new long-term care facility in La Ronge. With the waiting lists of almost one full year, I would like to read the prayer as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately invest in the planning and construction of new long-term care beds in La Ronge.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of La Ronge and area. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition, a petition in support of affordable undergraduate tuition and a request for the Sask Party's actions to match its rhetoric. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to implement a long-term tuition management strategy in which tuition is increased by an average of 2 per cent or the most recent increase to the consumer price index.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to providing safe and affordable water and who yet have not had any commitment of assistance. This has now resulted in water bills in excess of \$165 per month and is causing residents to choose between water and necessities such as nutritious food. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to financially assist the town of Duck Lake residents for the good of their health and safety due to the exorbitant water rates being forced on them by a government agency, and that this government fulfills its commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the good residents of Duck Lake and Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of the withdrawal of Bill 80. Mr. Speaker, the existing construction industry labour relations Act, 1992, has proved a stable environment for labour relations in the construction industry in our province. And with the stable environment, Mr. Speaker, we all know this provides for quality and safe work construction sites. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to withdraw its ill-conceived Bill 80, *The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2009* which dismantles the proud history of the building trades in this province, creates instability in the labour market, and impacts the quality of training required of workers before entering the workforce.

And as in duty bound, the petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by the people in Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to present a petition in support of reducing the interest rates on fixed-rate student loans to prime. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners note that students in Saskatchewan are paying the highest amount of interest on fixed-rate student loans in Canada at prime plus 2.5 per cent. The petitioners, Mr. Speaker, call upon the Legislative Assembly to:

... cause the government to immediately reduce the interest on fixed-rate student loans to the prime rate of borrowing so that students can accumulate less debt and focus their finances on building their lives here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by Saskatchewan residents whose addresses appear to be all from the city of Regina but I'm assuming, Mr. Speaker, probably come from many communities across the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan concerned about this government's disregard for legal and constitutional rights. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to direct marriage commissioners to uphold the law and the equality rights of all Saskatchewan couples, and to withdraw the reference to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal that would allow marriage commissioners to opt out of the legal obligation to provide all couples with civil marriage services.

And is in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so submit, Mr. Speaker. The signatures on the petition are from residents of Regina, Saskatoon, and North Battleford.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise again here today as I have every day in this session to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents of Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of their finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the shameful \$1 billion deficit that's been created and they recognize that this is a problem that is getting worse, not better, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to start managing our provincial finances responsibly and prudently to ensure that it does not continue its trend of massive budgetary shortfalls, runaway and unsustainable spending, equity stripping from our Crowns, and irresponsible revenue setting.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Estevan. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in support of the expansion of the graduate

retention program. This petition, Mr. Speaker, is basically about fairness and about the need to retain the best and the brightest here in the province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitioners are from Estevan and Weyburn. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition for a private Bill on behalf of the petitioners from the Orange Benevolent Society of Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Assembly may be pleased to amend *An Act to incorporate The Orange Benevolent Society of Saskatchewan*, being chapter 79 of the *Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1927*.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, and this petition is signed by the executive director of the Orange Benevolent Society and I am pleased to present it on their behalf.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Saskatchewan Paralympian Wins Silver

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Vancouver 2010 Winter Paralympics got off to a great start this past weekend. I'm proud to announce that Colette Bourgonje from Saskatoon captured Canada's first medal on Sunday, winning a silver in the 10-kilometre cross-country sit-ski.

Collette Bourgonje is originally from Porcupine Plain but now resides in Saskatoon. She was a nationally renowned cross-country runner, and after a tragic accident in 1980 she took up wheelchair racing and later cross-country skiing in the sit-ski class.

Not only is Ms. Bourgonje the only Canadian to compete in all five Paralympic Winter Games, this weekend's silver medal makes her the first Paralympian to win a medal on home turf. Ms. Bourgonje, who is 48 years old, proudly told the media that, "Age is nothing, attitude is everything and I lived by that today."

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, the Paralympics emphasize the participants' athletic achievements, not their disability. As the official motto

of the "Spirit In Motion" attests, the games are a remarkable display of how to overcome physical barriers to succeed.

As Sir Philip Craven, president of the international Paralympic committee, put it so eloquently: "The paralympic movement inspires people both with and without a disability to interact in the same global family, enjoy equal social rights and build a harmonious world together."

I ask all members to join with me today in congratulating Colette Bourgonje on her silver medal, and in wishing all Canadian Paralympians good luck in the days to come.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Agricultural Safety Week

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March 14th to 20th has been proclaimed Agricultural Safety Week in Saskatchewan. This week is a time to make note of the hazards that exist on farms across this great province and to find ways to make farming safer.

Compared to the national average, Saskatchewan farmers have twice the hospitalization rate and one and a half times the death rate for injury. Every single year, an average of 21 people die on provincial farms and over 300 are hospitalized due to preventable injuries.

Many people don't realize that farming is the fourth most hazardous industry in Canada. As a crucial part of our growing economy and a vital human resource, we need to be aware of the dangers facing our farmers and support safety initiatives for them. Mr. Speaker, farming was the bedrock that this province was built on, and continues to be a cornerstone of our growing economy.

While we strive to provide safe workplaces across the province, we must remember that farming can also lead to serious injuries to family members. All too often, a loved one has been needlessly injured or killed, and we must work to prevent these tragic accidents from occurring.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

100th Anniversary of International Women's Day

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, on March 6th, my colleagues from Regina Dewdney, Regina Elphinstone-Centre, Regina Rosemont, and myself had the privilege of attending Honour & Give, the 100th anniversary celebration of International Women's Day. The event, which was hosted by the Prairie Lily Feminist Society, had an outstanding turnout with over 550 people attending the celebration.

One of the features of the evening was a slide presentation that featured 100 women of significance and influence. Some of the women featured were Dr. Lynda Haverstock for her achievement as the first female leader of a Saskatchewan provincial political party, Nettie Wiebe for her political

involvement and advocacy, and of course, Buffy Sainte-Marie, who was born on the Piapot Reserve, for her role in the advancement of women's issues globally.

Buffy Sainte-Marie was also the guest speaker for the evening, and provided the crowd with a provocative presentation on the differences between men and women, and how they relate to each other. The Prairie Lily Feminist Society is a newly informed society of Saskatchewan feminists. They focus on empowerment, education, and skill building, in order to build a network of support, solidarity, and sisterhood for women across Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government has shown its lack of respect for such issues, given that it has cancelled the funding for the Status of Women office and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is not even one of the female members of their caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all of my colleagues to congratulate the Prairie Lily Feminist Society on a very successful event to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day and the accomplishments that women have achieved. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Good Economic News

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are more good news stories about the province of Saskatchewan today. Mr. Speaker, the *Leader-Post* business section was full of positive news. Two of the headlines were "Sask. expected to lead" and "Expansion completed at gas plant."

The people of our province should be proud and encouraged to see such headlines because their hard work continues to improve Saskatchewan's economy. Mr. Speaker, the article, "Sask. expected to lead" states that CIBC World Markets upgraded its 2010 economic growth projections. They have bumped up Saskatchewan's projected nation-leading economic growth by half a percentage point, fully to 3.5 per cent. A senior economist states that:

In Saskatchewan's case, I'm not focused particularly on the downturn in 2009. I'm focused on what looked to be strong fundamentals for supporting positive and robust growth, not just for this year, but next year, too.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that professionals around the world notice what people in Saskatchewan already know: our economy is strong.

Mr. Speaker, why do the NDP [New Democratic Party] always want to talk negatively about the people of Saskatchewan and their economy? I guess, Mr. Speaker, some people appreciate the beauty of a rose, while others will always complain about how prickly the thorns are.

The Speaker: — Next statement. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week, on March 11th at the United Nations in New York, Canada ratified the UN [United Nations] Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. And there are many to be thanked for making this happen from Saskatchewan, including the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living and IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Equity Alliance].

This is a moment for all Canadians should be proud of, says Kevin McTavish, executive director of the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living.

And I would like to acknowledge the final push led by Judy Wasylycia-Leis, MP, NDP critic for persons with disabilities, and MP Steven Fletcher in their motion of December 10th calling on the government to ratify the convention ahead of the Paralympics. This motion was passed by all parties just before parliament broke for Christmas. And now we can proudly celebrate the Paralympics in Vancouver without looking over our shoulder. Mr. Speaker, the convention is an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

And as a party to the convention, Canada is required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and to ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way in recognizing basic human rights, but our work is still not yet done as we struggle to make sure our province and our country for all citizens is a better place to live. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Issues Facing Livestock Producers

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are some things that will always be true in Saskatchewan — winters will be cold, summers will be hot, livestock producers will always know what is best for themselves, and the NDP will always be disconnected from rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have here an opposition that cannot even understand the basic concepts of *The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 2009*. Something as simple as a \$2 levy seems to mystify the member from Nutana.

The Chair of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, Mr. Jack Hextall, had to write to the member to correct her ill-advised argument in the House on March 9th and point out why this Bill is very important to the livestock producers of Saskatchewan. The member from Nutana suggested that producers cannot make a buck in the cattle industry because it's gone down the tubes since these guys came to office. Mr. Hextall corrects the member again, stating, "The real crux for beef producers came in May 2003 with BSE. Further contributing factors are the rise in the Canadian dollar and the recession."

Did the former agricultural critic really forget about BSE

[bovine spongiform encephalopathy]? This is yet again another demonstration of the disconnect between the NDP and rural Saskatchewan. The complete lack of understanding of the issues that agricultural producers are facing is yet another slap in the face to rural Saskatchewan from a backwards-looking, out-of-date NDP opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Last Year's Budget

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year when former NDP Finance minister Harry Van Mulligen took the members opposite to task for the wrong-headed budget, the member from Meadow Lake had the audacity to stand up in this Chamber and mock Mr. Van Mulligen.

That member said, I quote, "To put it bluntly, he's dead wrong." The member from Meadow Lake went on to say, I quote, "... it's truly alarming that someone could occupy the office of minister of Finance and have such little understanding of one of the province's most important revenue sources."

He didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker, he went on. I quote, "Today I would call on that member to do the right thing — acknowledge his serious blunder and publicly correct the false claims he made to the people of Saskatchewan..."

Mr. Speaker, that's what the member from Meadow Lake said last year, mocking our former Finance critic and lauding the Sask Party's failed budget. Well one year later, we see the fruit of the Sask Party budget: a 110 per cent miss on potash revenue projections, double digit runaway spending, a provincial bank account that has gone from \$2.3 billion to a deficit of \$1 billion, and the Premier is writing cheques to the potash companies while he's telling Saskatchewan people to wait for next year. Talk about truly alarming, Mr. Speaker, the last Sask Party budget was dead wrong from the very beginning.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Chiropractic Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health has said that chiropractic care is an affordable treatment that people are willing to pay for. Well, Mr. Speaker, in the words of Kim, one of many Saskatchewan people who live with multiple sclerosis:

These treatments may appear affordable when they're needed only occasionally, but when required weekly they become a burden. Without these treatments I would become disabled. I would have to go on disability, which would make me more dependent on the government and government-funded services.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to Kim, who's here today to hear the answer, and the many citizens like her, why his government is axing funding to a service that allows people to

remain active, contributing members of society?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, I've been elected for 10 years, I've had the opportunity to attend many of the lobby's information evenings that the chiropractors have put on when we were in opposition and the last couple years that we have been in government, Mr. Speaker. They've been very educational, informative for all of our MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. Not once will you hear me, as the Minister of Health or our government, question the efficacy of the treatments that chiropractors give to thousands and thousands of people around this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said that when you look at the chiropractic services across Canada, there are a number of provinces and territories that don't cover any chiropractic services at all — nine. Mr. Speaker, there's a couple that cover for low income and, Mr. Speaker, there's a couple that cover general chiropractic services, Mr. Speaker. As I said, there is no one questioning their efficacy.

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

Ms. Junor: — No, Mr. Speaker, most people are just questioning the minister's sincerity.

Charlene suffers from Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, CMT, a progressive disorder affecting both motor and sensory skills. She requires oxygen 24 hours a day and uses a VPAP [variable positive airway pressure] machine to breathe at night. Charlene visits a chiropractor regularly for treatment of lower back pain, as a result of the surgery she has undergone, and shoulder pain which is common in CMT patients.

Charlene lives on a disability income. If chiropractic care funding is cut, Charlene will be forced to pay over \$1,500 a year for treatment. She cannot afford that, and her alternative is to live in a numb, medicated state. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to Charlene, who is also here today, how she will pay for the chiropractic care she needs when he cuts the funding?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, chiropractic service right now in Saskatchewan is a shared service that the government subsidizes. It pays for a portion of every treatment and the patient pays for the larger share, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward on March 24th, a decision will be made. It will be communicated as to whether that subsidy is still in place. But I will say though, Mr. Speaker, that when you look across Canada, when you look across, you know, the rest of provinces, some cover, some don't, just like many other basket of services that we offer in health care, Mr. Speaker. Some are dictated by the *Canada Health Act* that have to be subsidized, others aren't. And it's a decision of provincial governments at various levels as to whether they decide to cover those services, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to the

next question.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the people are looking forward to actually an answer as well.

Ten years ago, Kathy went on disability due to debilitating headaches, jaw and shoulder pain. After seeing a chiropractor twice a week for over a year, the pain subsided to a point where Kathy says, “My quality of life has increased substantially.” Kathy can’t afford to pay 100 per cent of her chiropractic care services. If funding for chiropractic is eliminated, to quote Kathy, “My quality of life will once again slip into something that I would not wish on anyone.”

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to Kathy, who is also here today, and others like her why his government is taking actions that will force her to suffer with debilitating pain and to live a substandard quality of life?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, every day across this province in many communities, large and small, chiropractors supply services and do a great job of supplying that service. People choose to go to the chiropractor if they so choose and it’s partially subsidized, Mr. Speaker. Those services, whether it’s subsidized or not subsidized, will be available in those communities, Mr. Speaker. It’s been the evidence in other provinces.

But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a basket of services that we cover through the Ministry of Health. Some are subsidized, some aren’t, Mr. Speaker. And as we move towards March 24th, like in every other budget year when decisions were made by previous governments, those are communicated on March the 24th, Mr. Speaker. I don’t know if she’s asking me to communicate them before.

I remember not too long ago when they were in government, Mr. Speaker, they raised the PST [provincial sales tax] one per cent. They didn’t tell anybody before, in fact they didn’t tell them in an election. They did it the day of the budget.

[14:15]

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, in the gallery today are a number of people who haven’t chosen to be injured, but they’re very concerned about the government’s refusal to honour their agreement with the Saskatchewan chiropractors. Their experiences, in the cases that I’ve shared today, are reflective of the many more stories of people who will be hurt by this government’s failure to continue to fund chiropractic care. And the minister may be dodging until the 24th, but he has pretty clearly said and intimated and suggested and wink-winked that it’s going to be gone.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is he going to honour the

agreement that was agreed to with the chiropractors and to continue to fund chiropractic care, or are these people and others like them who rely on chiropractic care going to be the next victims of his government’s financial mismanagement? Yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I answered these questions last week, and I’ve answered them a number of times today. The answer will be communicated to all in the province on March 24th.

There are varying degrees of coverage, as I said, across Canada. In Manitoba they cover chiropractic services to a maximum of 12 visits per year. Other provinces will only cover for low income. And the vast majority, nine provinces and territories, don’t cover chiropractic services at all, not even for low income.

There is a real variance around the province, Mr. Speaker. And as we move towards the 24th, as I said, Mr. Speaker, the decision will be announced at that time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Funding for Health Care Facilities

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday morning *The Battlefords Daily News* reported that Prairie North Regional Authority chief executive officer David Fan is hopeful but doubtful that next week’s provincial budget will identify funding for the replacement of Saskatchewan Hospital. Can the minister tell Mr. Fan, those who care about mental health in Saskatchewan and others, should David Fan be hopeful or doubtful?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, over the last two and a half years as the Minister of Health I’ve had the great opportunity to travel the province and talk to many health care professions, but also visit many health care facilities. And I have been through the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, a full tour of the facility, and it is the oldest health care facility we have in the province.

It is shameful that after 16 years . . . And for a few years the member opposite who has asked the question was the Minister of Health, never moved on the file. Never moved on the file, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we’ve put \$450,000 in to planning . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We have put . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the half a dozen opposition members to work with the other members to allow

the minister to respond.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we put \$450,000 into the health region to do planning for this facility. We know that it's in poor shape. But unfortunately many of our health care facilities are in rough shape because of the decline and the deterioration that was let to go under the former government. They simply didn't put enough into capital to keep our health care facilities in the proper shape.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fan told the *Daily News* that he's doubtful because, and I quote, "There's not much money to be had at this point." He implies that while the financial status of the province is doing well, the provincial government's financial status is not. Therefore I argue that it's lack of financial competence that is holding up hospital reconstruction, not lack of need. To the minister: is Mr. Fan right? Is Saskatchewan hospital next year country or is it next, next, next, next year country?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, certainly as we move forward and we look at the shape of the Saskatchewan hospital in North Battleford, it's a provincial hospital, solely responsible for the provincial government to fund any construction of that facility. We've put 450,000 into planning as we move forward, and we see what is needed and scoped out. We'll certainly be moving on that facility into the future.

But what we won't do, Mr. Speaker, what we won't do is what that former government did, for example, to the people in Preeceville, where year after year after year they made an announcement like they did in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. You could be guaranteed every four years just before an election they'd make an announcement, and they never built it. It got done under our government.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the minister simply said, as he just did right now, nearly half a million dollars for additional planning. But Mr. Fan says none of that money has been spent because the minister can't decide what to do with it. His exact words, Mr. Fan says his officials are still "waiting for government to clarify exactly what it is they're looking for with regards to this study."

So, Mr. Speaker, vulnerable people and families are being penalized because this government can't balance its books or manage what was a \$2.3 billion surplus in this province. So, Mr. Speaker, when is the minister going to quit stalling the project and take the steps necessary to move it forward?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the CEO [chief executive officer] David Fan said, the money is in the health region. They can go ahead and start with the planning and the scoping of a new facility as they move forward, which is a far cry from what the former government did.

And especially it's really ironic that that member would stand on his feet and question our government on the Sask Hospital. When he was the minister of Health, he did absolutely nothing in his own community, Mr. Speaker. That's absolutely amazing. Mr. Speaker, we're moving ahead on many facilities around the province, North Battleford being one of them, with planning money.

Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry that so many of these facilities have fallen in such poor repair over the last number of years. In fact in our first budget, we put \$100 million into just capital repairs within the health regions of our province, Mr. Speaker — far more than that government ever did in its 16 years.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Support for Northerners

Mr. Vermette: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government has been neglecting northern communities since the day they took office. They've done nothing to support the forestry industry. They've done nothing to address the shortage of affordable housing. While people with addictions and mental health issues are crying out for help, the Sask Party has done nothing.

When will the minister stop ignoring northern people and address the issues that matter?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know I can speak to the unprecedented infrastructure investment that this government has made into northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. You need look no further than communities like La Loche, like La Ronge. We have made very significant and very real investments in the futures of those communities, which we deeply believe in, Mr. Speaker. And we look forward to continuing to work with them in a very collaborative fashion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Highway 102 is the only road access for communities like Grandmother's Bay, Sucker River, Stanley Mission, Missinipe, Southend. Thousands of people depend on this road to get to and from their homes and to their workplace. Mr. Speaker, this highway has huge potholes and ruts that cause real danger to anyone who dares to drive on it. Emergency services are concerned about the response time and the care of the patients.

To the minister: does someone have to be killed or seriously injured before the Sask Party will fix this highway?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when our government took office two and a half years ago, we inherited a massive infrastructure deficit from the members opposite. We have many projects to do, Mr. Speaker, projects . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of Highways. Order. The Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many projects that need to be done across this province, Mr. Speaker, projects that were left undone by the members opposite. We have dramatically increased Highways budgets right across the province, Mr. Speaker. In fact the two largest Highways budgets in Saskatchewan history were the last two years under a Sask Party government. Mr. Speaker, we have much more work to do in the North. We've made a good start and will continue in that direction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the trucks that travel Highway 102 serve the mining industry and generate millions of dollars for this provincial government. Highway No. 102 also provides access to tourist destinations, bringing in millions into the provincial economy. In fact the member from Cypress Hills said on March 27th, 2007, "We need good quality roads, and we especially need them in the areas that are generating so much wealth for our economy and province."

To the minister: since the North contributes so much to the provincial economy, will he commit today to investing that wealth into paving Highway No. 102 to Southend?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, the North does contribute a great deal to the economy of this province. We recognize this, and we're doing work in the North. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite ignored the North, as they ignored rural Saskatchewan and the entire province and paid no attention to economic development.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing projects in the North. We'll continue to do projects in the North. Mr. Speaker, we recognize the vital role that the North plays in economic development, and we will continue on the good work that's already been started. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Forthcoming Budget

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, there's just something about the lead-up to this budget that's bringing a real sense of déjà vu to this Chamber. Last year this is what the minister had to say, and I quote, "This new balance is built on strong but cautious revenue estimates." That was last year. We know how that turned out, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the minister was back at the same rhetoric, saying, I quote, "This budget has been prepared with a great deal of discipline and caution and prudence."

To the minister: he was wrong last year. Why should we trust him now?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to again engage in the debate in this House, in the Assembly, in regard to the upcoming budget. Mr. Speaker, the member yesterday asked the question of what's the plan for the budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, you can see it today. In the business section of the paper today, Mr. Speaker, you can see how the economy of this province is going. Our plan is to keep the economy growing as it has in this last year and it's projected to do in the years coming.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan is going to lead this country in the next year or two by most forecasters' projections. Our budget is going to ensure that that continues.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, again, those comments make the opposition nervous. With record revenues, we see the Sask Party screw up the finances. What we wish they would do is simply leave the economy alone. It's doing just fine because of the people of this province.

Last year, last year, Mr. Speaker, the member from Carrot River Valley said, I quote:

. . . this budget is not only a fantastic and historic budget for Saskatchewan but also the best budget in all of Canada and probably the best [budget] in North America. Oh heck, let's go a little further, Mr. Speaker. I think it's going to be the best budget in the whole world.

Yesterday, we heard some of the over-the-top rhetoric again from the Minister of Finance about this year's budget which he called a great budget which will make Saskatchewan people very proud. To the minister: the over-the-top rhetoric is sounding eerily similar. Why should we expect different results this time round?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Party government budgets have created the opportunity for people in this province to grow. They've created the opportunity for people to do well. Three hundred million dollars tax relief from income tax is a very important tool for people to advance the needs of their families, to pay for rent, and to pay for the things families need. That's very important. Mr. Speaker, this province has improved its financial situation over the period of time that this government has been in place, and we've done it rather dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, there is no sense for the opposition to put gloom and doom on everything good that is happening in this province because this province is growing. And this province is going to lead the nation, and the Saskatchewan Party government wants to be very much an exciting part of that.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, last year the Minister of Energy and Resources said that, in his budget speech, I quote, “. . . people are looking at Saskatchewan and they’re saying, this government is on the right track. This government is moving in the right directions.”

That was last year, Mr. Speaker. Just days ago on BNN [Business News Network], the same minister said this. I quote, “You will see in our upcoming budget that, uh, I think it will be a very responsible budget.” Clearly the Sask Party government has learned absolutely nothing from their historic budget blunder of last year.

To the minister: why is the Sask Party refusing to learn from their lesson, and why are they setting us up for yet another disastrous budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, the inescapable facts of the matter are this province has improved its financial position significantly since this party took government. If we look at what was in the Growth and Financial Security Fund in 2007, in mid-year it was \$1.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, the third quarter forecast for this year is \$705 million, but importantly the debt of this province has gone down by \$2.7 billion, Mr. Speaker, which is a 2.165, a 2.165 improvement over the term of our government. That is important not only for today and tomorrow, but it’s important for the future going forward.

And that is the kind of fiscal management that we’ve done in spite of the unprecedented meltdown, if you like, of the potash industry in 2009-10 that nobody forecast. We didn’t forecast it. The independent forecasters didn’t see it. The potash corporations didn’t see it. There’s no one in the world that saw it coming, but it was a very significant . . .

The Speaker: — The minister’s time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we hope that the minister would get briefed by his officials or would have a conversation with the auditor. This year debt is on the rise under the Sask Party, even though their billboards suggest something different.

Mr. Speaker, according to reports from insiders, the déjà vu gets worse. Last year the Premier started off expecting \$1.9 billion in potash royalties. According to media reports, his Energy minister was predicting that potash revenues would top \$3 billion. Those projections were dead wrong.

This year insiders are telling us that government is planning a four-by-four strategy which will aim to reduce the size of the public service by 4 per cent in each of the next four years through attrition. Insiders tell us that these projections are bound to fail because many of these vacancies must be filled.

To the minister: last year he didn’t listen to his officials or the opposition. Why is he repeating the same mistakes all over again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, every year in our budget preparation work, we certainly make sure that we listen very carefully to the officials in every ministry, that we listen to the officials in Energy and Resources in regard to those commodities and what’s happening in that commodity world. We listen to the officials in the Ministry of Finance to see what the important factors are that we need to consider. That is certainly something that we’ve done again in this budget preparation.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to face the reality of the fact that revenues for the Government of Saskatchewan are not going to be as great as they were last year, potentially, and that we’re going to have to learn to live within our means. And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said we’re going to make sure that our budget is going to be balanced and that it’s going to be appropriate to the future of the province.

The future of the province isn’t this year or next year or about potash only. It’s about sustainability and the fact that we need to make sure that budgets will be sustainable in the future.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, here’s what we know so far. The Sask Party is using the same over-the-top rhetoric in the lead-up to this budget as they used last year. They’re ignoring the recommendations of their officials yet again. Like last year, they’re not properly thinking through their projections. And they’re making random cuts with no planning and no coordination.

To the minister: He’s got over a week, just one week to get this right. Will he listen to his officials and fix this budget before it does more damage to Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I can report to this House that this government has indeed listened to its officials. And it’s a good thing that we listened to our officials rather than the members opposite because they at least understand the opportunities in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the officials understand that the balancing of the budget is important, the paying down of debt was important. And one other thing that’s important is that we invest in the infrastructure that that government in the past has neglected. And so debt is rising in the Crowns as we make up the gap on infrastructure investment that has been so lacking by that previous administration.

Our administration, our government believes in the future. We believe in growth. We believe in Saskatchewan. And that’s going to be reflected in a sustainable way in the budget on the 24th.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Crown Investments.

**Information Services Corporation of
Saskatchewan Expansion**

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The minister earlier indicated there were guests here that would be interested in hearing the statement, and I would ask members to allow the minister to present the statement without interference, so guests can hear what the statement is. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce that Information Services Corporation is developing a new online portal to provide a more convenient and cost-effective means to deliver government services to businesses. Currently business owners are required to deal with several government ministries in order to conduct business in this province. This new service will provide a single point of access to most business services provided by government.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is very important to support the private sector and to attract entrepreneurs to our province. It makes it easier to conduct business in the province and will significantly reduce costs for both business and for government.

In 2011, ISC will launch the first phase of the project which will be an easy-to-use online business registration service, where new businesses will register with the corporations branch, with Workers' Compensation Board, and with the Ministry of Finance. In 2012, ISC will expand this service to provide a single point of access for day-to-day business needs, including getting necessary permits and licences, remitting taxes, and complying with other government regulations.

ISC will invest \$35 million over the next five years to complete the project. Mr. Speaker, this initiative demonstrates this government's commitment to making Saskatchewan an appealing place to start and to operate a business. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to, on behalf of the opposition, thank the minister for sending over a copy of her ministerial statement before the House started up this afternoon.

ISC I think is once again proving its value in providing both efficient and cost-effective government services, efficient and cost-effective to the taxpayer and to the public of Saskatchewan, at the same time providing value to property owners of various types — real property, personal property — and now business operators or potential business operators in the province of Saskatchewan. And it's a win-win for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

A government that likes to talk a lot about innovation and not

do very much about innovation, as opposition was very skeptical about the model of ISC. And if they'd had their way, I don't think, Mr. Speaker, the minister would have been in a position to make this very good announcement today.

But I want to congratulate the people of Saskatchewan, the Government of Saskatchewan, and ISC in particular on this new initiative, on this new expansion of valuable online services to the public of Saskatchewan.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 587 through 645.

The Speaker: — Questions 587 through 645 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 646 through 709.

The Speaker: — Questions 646 through 709 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 710 through 751.

The Speaker: — Questions 710 through 751 are ordered.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 97

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Bjornerud that **Bill No. 97 — *The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 2009*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity to rise in this House and to once again take part in the debate in this House. It's truly a privilege to do so. It's an honour to do so on behalf of the fine folks of Regina Northeast.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, I think all the members would agree that it's a privilege at any point in time to be able to rise in this House and take part in the debate and the business of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. It's a privilege that is, really throughout time, has been a privilege that's been honoured by very few people. And so, Mr. Speaker, I don't take it lightly whenever I do get the opportunity to enter into the debate. I do so with my best of abilities because I do know that it is truly an honour and a privilege and one that I quite frankly

feel in awe to have the opportunity in my lifetime to be able to participate in these proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, the debate today is the Bill No. 97. In the short title, it's *The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 2009*, but in the long title, Mr. Speaker — and I must draw your attention, it is the long title — it's *An Act to amend The Agri-Food Act, 2004, to repeal The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act, 1998 and The Cattle Marketing Deductions Regulations, 2004 and to make consequential amendments to The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Act*. Well, Mr. Speaker, it takes almost a page just to cover the title.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting Act the government has brought forward at this time. It makes some significant changes to the process that has been in place in this province for a while as in regards to the collection of the deductions from cattle being sold, deductions that go to the promoting and supporting and promoting the cattle industry in this great province.

And this Bill will now allow the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association — often referred to as the SCA — to collect both the \$1 non-refundable national levy collected on cattle sold at market and the \$2 refundable provincial levy collected on cattle sold at market. So now, Mr. Speaker, what we'll see is the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association will be collecting these levies and these funds that previously was collected by the Department of Agriculture itself. Previously both the national and the provincial levies were collected and went into a revolving fund in the department. But now, Mr. Speaker, this Bill as introduced by this government will change that. We will see a change in the authority to collect the levies for the national levy as well as for the provincial levy.

That is very important, I think, to the livestock industry in this great province because it is a fundamental pillar of financial support that helps to advertise the value of the industry, advertise the industry to make the industry known, I guess you would say, and the part the industry produces and the importance of the industry known to the fine people of Saskatchewan.

And they do so through their organizations and do so through advertising and provide information, and are in place in the event if a crisis situation should arise. They are in place to be able to dispense information, correct information, perhaps to alleviate any fears that people might have based on the misinformation they may receive in regards to a crisis situation that does occur.

In the past, Mr. Speaker, this was collected by the Department of Agriculture, and the funds were collected and held by the Department of Agriculture in a revolving fund. And the revolving fund was dispersed only after a decision of the board, consisted of a number of livestock producers, would funnel that money out. Now, Mr. Speaker, the process was fairly simple. The Department of Agriculture across this great province of ours, through their ability within the marketing mechanisms throughout this province, they would collect these fees from the livestock being sold. Both the national fee and the provincial fee was collected, and it was held in a revolving fund by the Department of Agriculture that . . .

[14:45]

An Hon. Member: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington. He can state his point of order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the member that is on his feet already spoke to this Bill on November the 9th, 2009.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to then take up where my colleague left off on the Bill, *An Act to amend The Agri-Food Act, 2004*. Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting Bill in that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I listened to the member's point of order, but I just want to point out to members that when members adjourn a motion, if they have adjourned the motion and no one has spoken in between, when the motion is first called, that member has the opportunity to again stand in their place to speak to the motion. It's my understanding that the member did not adjourn this . . . or adjourned this motion . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The information I have is that the member, while having adjourned, can still speak to the motion.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Muchly appreciate that. I find this a very interesting topic and a very interesting subject and one that I always enjoy having the opportunity to get up and speak on. So, Mr. Speaker, I will try to continue on from the point where I left off.

Mr. Speaker, as I think we are all aware, this Act will make some significant changes to the method used to collect the \$1 refundable national levy collected by the cattle that are sold at a livestock facility, and that the \$2 refundable provincial livestock levy that would be collected on the same animals when they are sold at a public auction ring. That money is then collected, now will be collected by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association.

But in the past, Mr. Speaker, it was done by the Department of Agriculture. And the Department of Agriculture had set up a fund, a revolving fund. That funding would be used to support the cattlemen's industry, the cattle industry in this great province through various mechanisms as rules required. For example it would be, could be used for advertising to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan were aware of the livestock industry and how important that livestock industry is to our province, how important that livestock industry is to the economy of Saskatchewan, the great services it provides, all the spinoff that comes from the livestock industry that certainly supports that industry and supports the economy of our province, supports the economy very importantly. And it's an economy of many of our small communities, Mr. Speaker. And we find that of course a very essential part of the economy of Saskatchewan.

You know, and a successful economy is not made of one major

source of revenue. A successful economy is made of a number, a number of sources of revenue so that the old saying is, you don't have all your eggs in one basket. It's spread out, so in the peaks and the hollows of revenue being returned to the livestock industry, it certainly balances out. But it supports the economy in general in the province.

And in the past, Mr. Speaker, in the past the system used was a system that would provide the Department of Agriculture the ability to collect both the national and the provincial levies so that they were held in a revolving fund by the Department of Agriculture. That revolving fund, Mr. Speaker, was not administered as such by the Department of Agriculture. It was held by the Department of Agriculture and dispensed by them, but it was only dispensed, only dispensed after the decision was made by a government-appointed board that consisted of a number of livestock producers. They would determine how that money should be used. They would determine how and when that money should be dispensed. And they would do so, Mr. Speaker, in a way that would certainly be beneficial to the livestock industry in Saskatchewan.

Now that is, as we've already indicated but I think it bears repeating, that is a very important industry to our province and to the commerce of Saskatchewan and to the economy of this great province of ours.

But the board of directors, the board that would oversee the distribution of those funds was a board that was made up of livestock producers — really what I would call front-line people, Mr. Speaker. These were people who were involved in the industry at the grassroots level. These are the people who recognized what the industry needed. These are the people that would have the ability to make recommendations as to what avenues should be used, the way the money should be used to strengthen this industry. And it would only be a benefit to all of the people of Saskatchewan by being a benefit to the economy of this great province.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was done in a fair and equitable and balanced way. It was done by the primary producers themselves that sat on that board. They made the decisions on behalf of their fellow producers as to how these funds could be distributed and used and dispensed, I should say, in a way that would be the most beneficial to the industry. And that, Mr. Speaker, was certainly essential to the well-being of the economy and essential to the well-being of the livestock industry in this great province of ours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, once it becomes proclaimed, will shift that. It will shift that. It will take the ability for the Department of Agriculture to now to collect the funds and to hold them in a revolving fund, but rather what it will do is now make it available to the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. They will have then control over those funds. And they then will make the decisions of how those funds will be used. They will make the decisions on what avenues those funds will be dispensed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a concern. This is a concern because, I believe, it's fair to say that not every livestock producer in Saskatchewan is a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. Not every livestock producer in Saskatchewan is a

member of the Cattlemen's Association. And, Mr. Speaker, that means that there will be no representation for those individuals who are not members of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association but yet are making those contributions at the check-offs when they sell their animals through the livestock marketing system in this great province.

When they sell their animals, they will be checked off just like everybody else. They will be levied the \$1 fee and the \$2 fee provincially. But yet, Mr. Speaker, that money now will go into the control of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. And if they're not a member, if the livestock producer is not a member — and I can assure you that many aren't — if they're not a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, then they will not have any input into how that money is used. They will not have any input. They will not have any say in how their money is spent to support their industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that becomes a concern to me because here we have a situation created by this government that we will be collecting money from all livestock producers, anybody who is dispensing cattle through an auction mart and the levees are being collected. The federal levee of \$1, the provincial levee of \$2 is being collected, going to the Cattlemen's Association, going into the fund there. But the producer who is having that money collected off his backs of his animals really will now not have any ability to have any input into how that money is used.

Mr. Speaker, this I don't — I simply can't — see as being correct. I certainly can't see it as being helpful to the industry. I can't see it when you have a smaller, select group of livestock producers under the umbrella of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association having the control over the funds that are collected by all the livestock that are marketed in this great province of ours. And yet not all of the producers who produce those animals who are contributing to that fund have the ability to have any input into how that fund is being dispensed. That, Mr. Speaker, becomes an issue that is a problem to me because in the past, when it was done by the Department of Agriculture, it went into a revolving fund. Every producer, every producer had input into it because every producer contributed.

But because it was being held by the Department of Agriculture and being dispensed upon the advice of a board that was made up of livestock producers, every producer had the opportunity to make the representation to either somebody on the board or perhaps to the department themselves or even through their local elected MLA to have some influence as to how that money was being disbursed.

So, Mr. Speaker, that raises an issue. That raises a big-time issue with me because it just doesn't seem correct, doesn't seem right at all that members should be obligated to pay. Members who are involved in the livestock industry are obligated to pay their levees because they're simply deducted at the source of market. At the auction-mart, for example, those levees are deducted.

The individual producer has no control over them. He can't say, well I don't want to contribute today, so don't take the fees off my animals. They don't have that ability, Mr. Speaker, because those deductions are taken right at the source of market. And, Mr. Speaker, that means that that money now, now will go into

the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, into their control. They will make the decisions of how that money is disbursed. They'll make the decisions on what that money is spent on. And the individual producer, if they're not a member, if they're not a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, then they'll have no say over the manner in which their money is being used.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is who asked for these changes? The government doesn't indicate anywhere that they were lobbied to make these changes. The government doesn't indicate any place who lobbied, who asked for these changes. That becomes the question, Mr. Speaker.

Who's the driving force behind this? Why did the government react in a way of developing such a Bill as Bill 97? At whose request? Who lobbied the government? What arguments did they put forward? Those are the interim . . . those are the types of information and those types of answers that we need on this side, Mr. Speaker, to be able to weigh the balance of this Bill and to see if this Bill has any merit to it at all. And, Mr. Speaker, that is, I suppose, the fundamental question that needs to be asked is, who lobbied the government?

Next of course, Mr. Speaker, is consultation. What consultation did this government do? Now we know from our past experiences on other Bills that the consultation by this government with groups that are being affected by changes to the Act are usually quite limited. In fact, Mr. Speaker, most of the Bills we've seen before this legislature, produced by this government, has had limited or no consultation done at all.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that once again that is not the case. I'm hoping that this government did do due diligence and did go out and consult with the livestock industry and those involved in the livestock industry as to the effect, as to the effect of this, changes as brought about as a result of this Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if that happened. And I say I wonder if that happened because it's been our caucus's opportunity to contact some producers. We haven't had the time, Mr. Speaker, to contact a wide range of producers, but we have contacted some producers and we were startled. And I have to use the word startled because simply that's the way we were. We were startled because when we contacted producers, what we found out was some producers liked the idea — yes they did — but some did not. But what startled us was a lot didn't know this was happening. A lot of producers didn't know this was happening.

Now I can't put a percentage on it, Mr. Speaker, because we haven't had the ability to talk to that wide a range of producers. But what those producers that we have talked to . . . It really startles me to know that this government hasn't done, hasn't done — once again, hasn't done — a reasonable job of consulting with the industry because a lot of producers freely admit they didn't know this was happening.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a case to be concerned about because when you have changes to an Act, when you have changes to an Act that can have a positive effect to those involved in the industry and to the industry itself . . . or it can have a negative effect, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

I believe that the government, this government, I believe any government of any political stripe fundamentally wants to make changes to modernize the Act that governs — in this particular case — the livestock industry, wants to modernize and bring it into line with the changes that has happened within the industry over the last number of years. And usually it's driven by the industry itself. Usually representatives from the industry will make presentations to the government and requests to the government and lobby the government for certain changes. And they will in that process be able to point out to the government, and the minister in particular, as to how these changes will be beneficial to the industry, how these changes will affect the industry in a very positive way, how it will grow the industry or how it will help grow the industry, how it will protect the industry, how it will make the industry stronger, and how it will add to the economy of this great province. That's usually the role of those involved in the industry who lobby the government for certain changes.

They want to see these changes because it's their experience, their first, front-line experiences that have told them and showed them that these changes need to be done in order to ensure that the industry stays strong, to ensure that the industry is an industry that will be there, not only for today and for the producers of today, but will be there for the future generations.

Mr. Speaker, that doesn't just happen with helter-skelter. It happens with good planning, good foresight, a vision of the future, a commitment to ensuring that those changes have positive effects to the industry, a commitment that an industry stays strong.

Now in the last few years, the livestock industry in Saskatchewan, I believe right across Canada, has been buffeted with some rather huge waves and some bad weather as far as the economy is concerned. We've had some BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] problems. We've had marketing problems. We've had low prices, and that has had a very negative effect on the industry, and it's buffeted the industry. And this hasn't been short term. It's been long term.

I've personally have had some experience in the industry, having been a livestock producer for 20 years. I know that high prices and — peaks and valleys I guess you would say in the market — high prices and low prices is not something uncommon to the industry. It's a commonplace in the industry. You take the good with the bad as the old-timers would say. But it was my experience that when you had a peak, peak years where the income of the prices of livestock, prices per pound was exceptionally high, it would be that way for a year or two, and then it would come down. And when it'd come down, sometimes it would go a long way down. It would go down to the bottom, and it would be at the bottom, but for a year or two. So at over a five-year or a 10-year period, it sort of all averaged out. And yes, you had to ride. You had to ride the waves, as the old-timers would say. You take the good with the bad. You level it off, and you made a profit. And that was, that was what the livestock industry was all about.

But in more recent years, we've seen that not be the case. In more recent years, we've seen the livestock industry face some

really tough economic challenges. We've seen challenges after challenge after challenge whack the industry as big waves as would roll across the bow of a ship. Well we're seeing that happen in the livestock industry with decreasing prices and situations that drove the value of the product down.

And that has been, Mr. Speaker, something that has been going on on a continuous basis for not only one or two years, but has now gone on for several years consecutively. And when that happens, Mr. Speaker, then it is tough. It is tough for the industry to hold its producers together. It is tough to have young people have the faith in the future to be able to ride those economic storms and to make a commitment that they are going to stick with this industry through thick and thin with the hope that when they come out the other end, they will be in a prosperous situation.

We're seeing, Mr. Speaker . . . And if you have travelled around the province — and I'm sure you have, Mr. Speaker, as well as many of the members in this great Assembly — and spent some time in rural Saskatchewan, and I have done that the last couple of summers, partially because of my responsibilities as the critic for Highways and Infrastructure. I was, you know, obligated, I guess you would say, to travel a lot of the highways in Saskatchewan, responding to reports I was getting in my office about road conditions and highway conditions. But that also gave me the opportunity to spend a lot of time in rural Saskatchewan, in small town Saskatchewan.

I had also the opportunity to talk and visit with many residents of small towns who, as you know, Mr. Speaker, from your experience, I'm sure, and many others will agree . . . that small town Saskatchewan is unique because it's just a warm and friendly place. You can go into a small town Saskatchewan café. There'll be, you know, a dozen or 15 people there, many of them old-timers, retired already. And it doesn't take much to strike up a conversation with them. And they're certainly willing to share their experiences and the experiences of their lifetime with you as they are a wealth of knowledge.

And when you sit down and you have the opportunity to spend, you know, a half hour or 45 minutes, sometimes even an hour and in some cases longer than that, chatting with these good folks, you learn a lot. You learn a lot about what is the issues that they are facing, you know, in their own little community and even some their personal issues. But you also gain a lot of knowledge from their experience of the past, the experiences that they have been through as a result of their chosen professions. And many of these of course are farmers, retired farmers. Most of them, many of them — I shouldn't say most — but many of them also didn't only grain farm; they also were livestock producers. They all run a herd of cattle, mostly beef cattle. There'd be the odd one you'd run into was a dairy operation, but they were a little further apart. But certainly beef operations were more common.

And you would sit and talk to them, and they would be willing to share with you some of their experiences and some of their thoughts of the industry, the industry as they experienced it through their career in farming — some 40 or 50 years — and how that industry has changed and how they recognize that industry has changed till today where you don't have the same opportunities, I suppose, as you had in the past with smaller

herds and smaller operations. Today it has become virtually a specialized operation.

When you talk to farmers out there today, it's not a 30- or a 40-cow herd. It's more like a 300- or a 400- cow herd. So it has certainly changed dramatically. And with that changes comes the need, I guess you would say, to have a reasonable return on an ongoing basis in order to support the business that is a large commerce. It's a large business when you're talking 350, 400 cows. It's a large, large business, and you need to have a decent turnover, a decent revenue stream in order to be able to maintain that.

And when you're in the industry, and you recognize that while you're in this industry you're going to have, you know, the good years and the bad years, and you're going to have to ride them through. And you can do it, and you can do it economically. And you can do it. And you can even plan for it to some degree because in the past you knew that it would be one or two years of bad prices, and then the prices would come back, and it would be a little bit of a relief there.

And you would once again be able to enjoy a year or two of profit before the costs perhaps caught up to the increased return that you're receiving. And it would be before the economy of the livestock industry had a downturn again. And there would be a portion of time there, a bit of margin of profit that you'd be able to sustain your operation with.

But in today's world, that's not the case when today's world, as a result of year after year of prices being so depressed, that a lot of cases that the return after years of labour in the livestock industry, the return was not adequate enough to meet the costs of maintaining that herd.

And that, Mr. Speaker, of course gets very hard to convince young people that this is what they should stay and do. I mean after one or two or three years, it's one thing. But when you're going on five-plus years of experiencing incomes that are less than the cost of production, then you find yourself very difficult to explain to young people why they should continue to stay in the industry.

And as a result of that, we're seeing the exodus of the industry today. We're seeing people who are making up their minds that this is enough. Some, Mr. Speaker, some are making up their minds because they're of the age of retirement. They're looking at retirement on the horizon. They're saying, I've been in the livestock industry all my life, and it's time for me to make a decision that I think I'm going to get out of it. I'm getting up there in age. The work is getting a little bit harder, and the return certainly isn't there. So I think I will just disperse my herd, and I will look forward to enjoying a more leisurely retirement.

And that is understandable, Mr. Speaker, because after spending a lifetime in the industry and working hard at it . . . And it is work; it's seven days a week, 365 days a year. And it's a commitment that you make when you go into that industry. And it's a commitment that you see through and many have. And it comes time for their retirement, so they graciously make their exit by dispersing their cow herd.

But what becomes quite concerning, Mr. Speaker, is when you're talking to younger people, people who are been in the industry perhaps 10 years, maybe even 15. I'm thinking of a couple myself that had at least been in the industry at least 15, maybe 20 years now. And when I say younger people, are certainly younger when they're compared to me, but they're middle aged. And they have said, look I've been in this industry for, you know, 15 or 20 years. And the first five years I enjoyed it, and it was profitable. I worked hard, made a profit. And I enjoyed the profit, and I reinvested that profit back into my operation. And as a result of that, I grew my operation, and we or I moved my cow herd from 100 to maybe 250 or 300. But today they're tired of working year after year after year with a commitment to the industry but not seeing a return that would be inadequate to meet the cost of production.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we see then is that we see that industry is in desperate need of some support. It's in desperate need of some support. Now I believe that there's a role for the federal government to play, and I believe that there's a role for the provincial government to play. And I believe that the provincial government has been lax on being able to attract from the federal government meaningful support to ensure that the industry would survive in this great province of ours.

But, Mr. Speaker, that support comes in various packages. It's also the support that's provided through the check-offs — the check-off system that is in this province here that causes the federal government, to the federal levy, to be checked off at \$1 per head as the animals are sold through the marketplace. There's also the provincial levy that's collected at \$2 a head, I believe it is, that is refundable if you apply, but I don't think too many producers have ever applied for the refunding of that levy.

But that levy can be used to strengthen the industry, can be used to strengthen the industry through an advocate position to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Canada fully realize how important this industry is to our economy — to the economy not only of Saskatchewan, but to the national economy — and how important it is that we continue to have that strong industry. And in order to have that strong industry, you have to be able to attract young people into the industry to continue on. You have to be able to attract them in. But in order to detract them, you have to be able to demonstrate to them that they can make a reasonable living, that they can enjoy a reasonable return from their efforts and their labour within that industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is the role for the levy that's being checked off here, the levy that's really a question here in this Bill being checked off and the role it can play to support the industry. And that's just perhaps one small way it can be used to support the industry.

Another way it could be used, a very important way it could be used, is to help lobby international governments in regards to many of the restrictions that they place on our beef and the importation of our beef. I'm thinking particularly of the United States who are looking at country of origin labelling that drives up the cost, drives up the cost to the packing plant because it's an extra handling of the product. They have to do an extra effort that they have to do. And it drives up the cost, and it makes then

the beef produced and coming out of Canada a little more costly than that coming from elsewhere.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also believe it increases the costs because in the packing plants when they are receiving semi loads of finished beef, they would have the ability, without the requirement for the country of origin labelling, without that they'd have the ability to blend the animals together, whether they came from the US [United States] or whether they came from Canada or whether they came from Ontario or Alberta or BC [British Columbia] or Wyoming or Oklahoma or wherever they might have come from. They'd be able to blend them together in types so that they would basically have packages of similar types of beef, and it wouldn't matter what country they came from because they've got to all be processed.

Whereas when you have a country of origin labelling required, that means that those animals coming in to the packing industry have to be segregated. They have to be separate. They have to have bins set aside for Canadian beef. When the semi-trailers are coming out of Brooks, Alberta or out of Saskatchewan here, hauling Saskatchewan's finished beef, and they're headed down to Sioux Falls and Sioux City to the huge, huge packing plants there, when they get there, they can't be just unloaded into the pen and blended in with other cattle of the same type. They have to be segregated. They have to be kept aside. They have to be kept in special pens which are designated Canadian pens. It's where Canadian cattle go. They have to be handled separately.

[15:15]

All of this, Mr. Speaker, increased the cost to the industry. All this increased the cost to the packing industry. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they pass those costs on. They pass those costs on to the consumer, only limited because the consumer isn't going to pay more for Canadian beef just simply because the packers have to pay more to handle it. The consumer's going to say, I want to buy the best beef possible for the least price. If that beef comes from the United States, they'll buy from the US. If that beef comes from Australia, they'll buy it from Australia.

So that means that Canadian beef, though more costly to the packer, the packer then is going to compensate themselves by paying less to the Canadian producer. That means, once again, the Canadian producer gets less. That means in a time when we have an economy and an industry that is under pressure, under economic pressure because of low cattle prices, we're seeing added costs that drive those prices down even more to the producer so that the producer's income is even less.

Mr. Speaker, that makes it tough then for the industry to be able to say to the young people, come and join our industry because there is a future here. It's tough to say that when they — the young people — look at it and say, well I can't see why I should put all the work, first all the investment, the capital investment, then all the work and all the commitment into an industry that doesn't return me the cost of production. That, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly causes young people to head the other way. They look at this and they say, no, I'm not going to do this. I'm going to do something else. I'm going to grain farm, or I'm going to go into raising legumes or perhaps into dehy operations.

We're seeing all types of other choices that farmers will make rather than getting involved in the livestock industry which, Mr. Speaker, is a concern to me because we spent a long time in this province. The former government, I believe even the last couple of former governments have worked very hard to try to build the livestock industry here in Saskatchewan. I know that during the time of the former government, the livestock population of Saskatchewan really took off. I think we had the largest livestock herd ever in the history of this province up until the change of government here. And now it's been going downhill ever since.

We're seeing the population, the breeding population of the herds in Saskatchewan here drop dramatically, and we're seeing some herds being sold off. And most recently — I shouldn't say most recently, it was probably a month, month and a half ago — I had the opportunity to be up in Tisdale, Saskatchewan, and there I ended up in a conversation with a producer who had been in the industry for a lot of years, a lot of years. And he was telling me that that fall at one of the markets that he was at there was a cow herd dispersal. These were bred cows. These were not cull cows. These were not the old cows. These were not cull cows that were cut off. These were good quality, firm, solid, breeding cows that on any given time would have gone into the breeding herd of this great province of ours, and the producers would have been happy to have them.

Well there was 90 of them. There was 90 of them that was dispersed at this particular sale. They were advertised. The advertising was done, well, right across the area, and the producers in the area certainly knew that this good quality herd was being dispersed on this particular date. And he tells me that all 90 cows went to slaughter. None of them went back into the cow herd. All went to slaughter.

So that's very concerning when you hear that because that's the mainstay, that's the mainstay of our industry — those young, solid breeding cows, many of them with 8 or 10 years of productive life ahead of them — and not being able to benefit from that because they've gone into the slaughter system because nobody out there was willing to expand their operation. Nobody out there was willing to invest in that industry, invest in those cows to support that industry.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping to be able to point out the need to have a check-off system and monies available through the check-off system to support that industry, to ensure that industry stays strong into the future. We have the check-off system. We have the funds available, and the funds are being checked off. The concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is how are these funds being used?

In the past, in the past, the funds were collected by the Department of Agriculture. The funds went into a revolving fund held by the Department of Agriculture, and these funds were then disbursed only upon the recommendations of a board that was made up of livestock producers. The livestock producers that sat on that board would make decisions as to what would be the best use of this money. How could this money be disbursed to best affect the industry, to ensure the industry would stay strong, to ensure that industry had the ability to react when perhaps a crisis would appear or a situation would appear with a foreign government that would need some

consultation or lobbying and that funds would be available. And the board would then make those decisions as to disburse those funds in that way.

But that, Mr. Speaker, meant that the revenue that was collected, the fees that were collected came from all the cattle that were sold through our auction system. That means every producer contributed. And that also means that when the funds were held in a revolving fund by the Department of Agriculture, that means every producer had say in how those funds would be used. They had say.

They could talk to those members of their industry who sat on the advisory board with the Department of Agriculture, advising how these funds should be spent. They could talk to them directly and share with them their thoughts, share with them their ideas. They could perhaps even talk to the department themselves if they couldn't get a hold of or didn't know who, perhaps, their representative on the board. They would be able to talk to the department themselves. They'd be able to call the department up and they'd be able to talk to somebody in the livestock division, the Department of Agriculture that would be able to relay — at least relay — their thoughts on to the board.

Even, Mr. Speaker, a little bit further afield, but even, Mr. Speaker, they would be able to talk to their MLA on either side of the House and they'd be able to share their thoughts and their concerns. Because it was their dollar. It was their dollar being collected. They had the right to have input into how that dollar was going to be spent.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if this Bill is to go through in its present form, we'll see that changed. If this Bill goes through in its present form, we will see that changed and it will be changed to allowing the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association to now collect the \$1 national levy and the \$2 provincial levy. And they will hold those funds, and they will make the decisions. I mean they, I mean the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association will make the decisions as to how those funds are disbursed. In principle, at first glance you say, well that's okay. That seems all right. Except, Mr. Speaker, except not every livestock producer in Saskatchewan is a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association.

Every livestock producer in Saskatchewan, when they sell their animals through the marketing system, will contribute to the fund. They will through the national check-off and the provincial check-off. But if they're not a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, they will not have the ability to influence how those funds are disbursed. Now, Mr. Speaker, I find that fundamentally wrong. I find a problem with that, Mr. Speaker, personally.

I would like to know what cattle producers across this great province of ours are saying about this. I'd like to know. I would like to know who lobbied the government to make these changes. What organization, what individuals lobbied the government to make these changes? Maybe it's legitimate. Maybe it is. But I don't know that because I don't know who lobbied the government. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, who the government talked to. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the government talked to anybody in the livestock industry in regards to these changes. Did they or did they not? I don't

know.

What I do know is that what little time we've had to be able to research this, we've found out that some producers like the idea and some producers did not like the idea. But what really shocked me was the large, large number of producers that had absolutely no idea that this was happening, had no idea this was happening.

So with that I would think that one would suggest that there needs to be further consultation, or at least some consultation, with the industry out there and the members of that industry. And there's, you know, there's simply a number of questions that arise when you look at this Bill. There's a number of questions that arise from the intent of this Bill that I believe need to be asked.

Now it's one thing for me to be curious. It's one thing for me to be wondering about what questions should be asked. I think it's more important that we hear from the people involved in the industry — the front-line people, the people who get up every morning and go out there and look after those animals, that get up every morning regardless of how cold it may be. In the winter months they get up every morning and they go out there and they feed those animals and make sure that they're well looked after. The same people who go out there, and when they discover that their watering bowl is froze and their cattle aren't getting to fresh water, they have to do whatever it takes to get that watering bowl working.

And usually what it ends up being is very, very cold hands. Because I've had that opportunity and experience in my life more than once, and I can assure you when it's 35 and 40 below outside and there's a wind blowing and you have to take a watering bowl apart, you're going to end up getting wet. It can't be helped. You're going to end up getting wet. And when you get wet and your hands or perhaps even as far up as your elbow and get a little water splashed on the front of you and it's 35 below outside, that freezes very quickly. I can assure you one thing; your hands get very cold.

And those are the things that those producers go through. They don't complain about it. Many of them won't even talk about it because it's just a thing they do. If they have to do it, they do it. They don't think twice about it. But it's a commitment that they make to ensuring that those animals are looked after, and looked after in the best of possible ways.

And it's because they have pride, they have a pride in their herd. They have a pride in the herd that they have, their cattle that they have. They have a pride in their industry. And they certainly should have the ability to have input into the decision making process of how the funds that are being checked off of those same animals that they sell at the market, they should have the ability to have input and some say, some sense of direction, some ability to influence how those funds are disbursed, Mr. Speaker. And this Bill, it will certainly limit that. If this Bill is proclaimed it will certainly limit that.

Because many, many producers out there who are involved in the livestock industry and maybe have been for generations but have never been a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, okay? And therefore once the Bill is proclaimed

and the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association has sole control, sole jurisdiction over the funds that are being collected through the check-offs, they will have the ability to determine how those funds are disbursed and not that of the producer whose funds it is that they are disbursing. That, Mr. Speaker, I find very, very questionable, very questionable.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there is no indication in this Bill, absolutely no indication in this Bill anywhere that I have been able to come across, or any of my colleagues, as to the fundamental answers to some very fundamental questions, like what is the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association doing with these funds into the future? We're saying they're going to collect the funds. We're saying they're going to disburse the funds. But nowhere does it say how they're going to disburse the funds.

What are they going to spend those funds on? Is there any type of guidelines? Have they put forward any suggestions or any types of guidelines of how they would spend producers' money, producers' money that they're going to be collecting — many producers who are not members? Many producers have no input or no influence into how those funds would be disbursed. They haven't had any idea how the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association plans to use that money.

And it may be very legit. They may have some very good ideas, very solid ideas that will support the industry, and that could be. All I'm asking is I'd like to hear. I'd like the producers of this province to know what those ideas are — unlike the results of some of our research which show that the vast majority of producers of Saskatchewan have no idea that this change, that this Act is coming about and that these changes are going to happen. No idea. And they have absolutely no idea thusly, Mr. Speaker, they have absolutely no idea of what the plans are by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association as far as the use of these funds into the future.

Mr. Speaker, that's just one of a very simple question that I think needs to be asked or, more importantly I think, needs to be answered. Now how much money, Mr. Speaker, how much money will be allotted to research and development within the industry? Another question, Mr. Speaker. How much money will be allotted to research and development? We know the amount of . . . We have at least a pretty good idea of the amount of funds that's going to be collected. We know that we're going to be collecting \$1 federal levy, national levy, and a \$2 provincial levy on every animal sold through our marketing system. And this fund will . . . The money will now go into a fund that's going to be held with the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association.

[15:30]

And what we're asking — and I think it's only fair that the industry should have some idea of what the plans of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association has for this money — a simple question, a very important question. Because the success in the future of having a strong industry here is dependent upon being able to meet the changes and the challenges of a changing world, and that in order to do that, we know that research and development is the key to success. We have to be prepared to meet those changes. We can't meet those changes unless we know what they are. When we have an idea what those changes

are, we need to be able to produce the product that will meet those changes and continue to have a strong industry in this great province. In order to do that, in order to do that we must have research and development to ensure that we have the strong industry here that can, even in these depressed times, in these depressed times when the revenue being generated in the industry is limited in many cases not even to the cost of production, but it is even at that time to be more important that we have a good, solid research and development so that we can have a strong industry.

We can meet the changes of the changing economy. We can meet the changes that what we find other countries . . . Perhaps their demands in those countries are changing because of lifestyle changes, because of economic changes within those countries. Often that will drive demand by their population to change and we need to be able to react to those changes. We need to be able to identify those changes even before they happen so that we can be prepared to react to them, so we can be prepared to capture that market when those changes come about. And, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't happen, that doesn't happen accidentally. It happens after a reasonably good planning. It happens after foresight, vision, and part of that vision is having a good research and good development aspect to the industry.

Mr. Speaker, my question quite simply is: how much of the money will be allocated to research and development within the industry? That's a fairly simple, straightforward question, one that I think every producer would like to know the answer to. One that every producer has a right to know the answer to. Mr. Speaker, we have indicated the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association as being the organization that will now collect the funds, the check-off funds. The \$1 non-refundable national levy and the \$2 refundable provincial levy will now be collected by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. Of course this begs the question that that's not the only livestock association in this great province. There are many other livestock associations.

And one that comes to mind, because in years past I was actually a member of it, was the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association. And, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what role will the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association and its members, which are cattle producers, livestock producers, what role will they play in being able to influence the expenditure of the levies by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association?

Will there be any opportunity for producer organizations such as the Stock Growers Association to have the ability to carry out conversations, to have the ability to have meetings, to have the ability to, in a meaningful way, in a meaningful way, to have influence over the disbursement of the funds by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association?

Because quite frankly, I've very much enjoyed my time and my relationship with the Stock Growers Association. And it was primarily an operation that we were involved in because most of the members in the association that I was a . . . the branch of the association I was involved in, were those who grazed their cattle in the forest reserve. And there was many of us. And it was a key component to our operation, was the ability to continue to lease grazing rights in the provincial forest, and in some cases provincial parks, to run our cattle.

Because quite frankly, it was a commerce that benefited us, but it also benefited the forestry. Because if you talk to those people who are involved in firefighting and fire suppressions, they will tell you that when the underbrush is suppressed and the dry grass is not there, then they don't have the fuel to feed the fire. And it often makes the ability to contain a fire or even prevent a fire much easier.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a question I would have — and I think many producers across this great province would have — is, what role will other farm organizations and livestock organizations such as, I'll just use for an example, such as the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, what role will they have in having any influence over disbursement and the way that the money is disbursed by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association? Will the Stock Growers Association and other livestock associations benefit in any manner, shape, or form from the revenues being collected, the fees being collected by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association?

A question I have, a question I have is, is there provisions within the agreement with the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association that they will be able to use some of the funds collected through the check-off system to fund the day-to-day operations of their own agency or their own association? Will producers' check-offs go to funding the day-to-day operation of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association? Is there provisions in there for that or is there provisions that will prevent that?

Those are the questions, Mr. Speaker, I think need to be answered. And I don't think they're unfair questions. I mean after all, it's the producers who are funding this. It's the producers through their check-off system are funding this . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Hickie: — To ask leave for introduction of guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I recognize the member from Prince Albert.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well to you and through you, to all members of the Assembly this afternoon, I am going to have some great pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Corey O'Soup from Saskatoon who was our candidate in Riversdale constituency by-election last year. I got a chance to work with Corey . . .

An Hon. Member: — He came close.

Mr. Hickie: — And he came close, very close. Yes, he did. I had a chance to door knock with Corey on three different occasions and work on election day with him. And I just want to welcome him to his Assembly and say it's good to see you, sir. I'm glad you're back in the fold. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 97 — *The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 2009* (continued)

Mr. Harper: — Well, Mr. Speaker, before I get back to my remarks, I would like to join with the member from Prince Albert in welcoming Mr. O'Soup to the legislature here. I do realize that he was the Sask Party candidate in the by-election in Saskatoon Riversdale, and I do want to welcome him here.

And I hope he enjoys his time in this Assembly and I hope he enjoys the view from the gallery because, Mr. Speaker, as long as he runs for a Sask Party candidate in Saskatchewan, the only view of this Assembly he'll ever enjoy is that from the gallery. So welcome, Mr. O'Soup.

Mr. Speaker, I will get back to the debate at hand now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it is interesting, I suppose, that some of these changes are being made. And they're being made in most cases without the knowledge of the producers themselves. We've had the opportunity, as I have already stated, we've had the opportunity to talk to some producers across this great province and many of them have indicated that they had no idea, they absolutely had no idea that these changes were happening. And that, Mr. Speaker, then leads me to wonder about what was wrong with the old system of collecting the check-off revenues and holding them in a revolving fund in the Department of Agriculture to be disbursed only after the suggestion and the advice and the direction was given to the department by . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Quennell: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for their indulgence. And I apologize for interrupting the member that was on his feet. I hope I didn't interrupt his train of thought, and if I did, I hope that he can find it again while he's seated.

In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is an old friend of mine, David Brindle. The member from Regina Lakeview on occasion introduces to this Legislative Assembly classrooms from Sheldon Williams Collegiate. And a few short years ago — or at least they seem like short years ago — such an introduction might have included David and I, who went to high school together at Sheldon Williams Collegiate, Mr. Speaker. He was a lot more clean-cut looking then, at the time, because I think he

was in the Regina Lions Band. And I was not as quite clean cut as I might look now, Mr. Speaker. Times have changed.

I've never quite figured out what I want to do when I grow up, and I'm kind of getting close to it I think, Mr. Speaker. But David always knew. He went straight into journalism, at one point anchored CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Newsworld out of Calgary, until very recently hosted a talk show in Vancouver, and is launching something I'm not quite sure I entirely understand, sort of an online media talk show. I think people from Saskatchewan will be hearing a lot more from him in the near future because of it.

And in any case, I introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly my friend, David Brindle. And I hope that everyone welcomes him here to the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 97 — *The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 2009* (continued)

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do think I can find the point where I left off in this and pick up from there. If not, Mr. Speaker, then I'll just have to start from the beginning and go all through it again, that's all, because I don't want to miss anything.

But, Mr. Speaker, a number of questions do arise when you look at this Bill and you start to review this Bill and, more importantly, when you start to talk to producers out there, and producer organizations. One of the questions is that in the old system in the past, in the old system where the money was collected by the Department of Agriculture, it was held in a revolving fund and it was only disbursed after and upon the advice of a board of directors that was made up of livestock producers. Then some of that money, some of that money went to the Stock Growers Association, and some of that money that went to the Stock Growers Association from the levies was used for the operation and the marketing that they did, that they do on behalf of their member producers.

My question then, Mr. Speaker, with these changes, these changes that are proposed in this Bill, if this Bill is proclaimed, then would restrict the funds to be collected to that of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association only. So does that mean that the agreement that was in place with the Department of Agriculture in the past by the Stock Growers Association that some of those levies, some of those funds would flow through to the Stock Growers Association to continue to support their organization and support their operation and their marketing?

Because, Mr. Speaker, the Stock Growers Association is a producer association. It's made up of simply the producers; there is no hierarchy that would make up this particular organization. It is simply an organization of producers that do a very good job of representing their members and do a very good

job of being able to market their products.

So that's another question, Mr. Speaker, that I think not only I would have but I think members of the Stock Growers Association would also like to know if they can rely on the continued flow of those funds as they had under the old system. Mr. Speaker, again the questions that come to mind here when you look at a Bill that so dramatically changes things, so dramatically changes things.

And it's been my experience in this great Assembly of ours, as I'm sure the other members, is that being in government is not a easy job. It is a job that you have to be very careful when you make changes because the way the system of government operates, both in this province and this great country of ours, is very interlocked. It's very tied together, and sometimes when you make a change somewhere in an Act, you have to be very careful of what the ramifications of that change might be. In some cases it may be like a domino effect. When you make one change and you have a domino start to fall and you have unintended consequences as a result of that, unintended changes are forced because of that.

And I'm wondering, has this government taken the time, has this government taken the time to do the due diligence to ensure that any negative effects from the changes are going to be very limited or perhaps non-existent? Has this government done that homework? Have they done their homework? Have they gone out and talked to the individuals who are involved in the industry here who are going to be affected through these changes? And fairly massive changes, Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated.

[15:45]

If you look at the changes in Bill 97, and it says right here in the title, *An Act to amend The Agri-Food Act, 2004* — changes there. Then it goes on to say “to repeal *The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act, 1998*” — changes there; “and *The Cattle Marketing Deductions Regulations, 2004*” — changes there; “and to make consequential amendments to *The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Act*”— changes there.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of changes. This Bill will create a lot of changes. Now what are the effect of these changes? Has the department done its due diligence and been able to identify those changes but more importantly been able to identify the effect of those changes? And how will it affect the individual producers out there? How will it affect the individual producer organizations that they are members of, Mr. Speaker? And many of them are very reliant upon those organizations for their advice, for their direction, for a bit of a window into the future as to what the future may hold, and I think they're rather reliant on these organizations.

And I think that most producers would want to have the comfort of knowing that these changes, the changes that are proposed in this Bill, would not have a negative effect on their organizations, but more importantly or as importantly, a negative effect on them and their operations. Because we know that the margins of profit in the livestock industry and the livestock operations today are very narrow, are very narrow,

and that any significant change to that can be enough to cause the operation to go from a very, very thin, profitable operation to a negative operation and perhaps even a dramatically negative operation. And that's hard to come back from. That's hard to come back from, Mr. Speaker.

In the old days, like I said, when there was peaks and valleys in the marketing and we would know that the valley would last about two years and we know that the peak would last about two years and we knew that that was going to happen, you could rely on that. You could make your plans on that. So a lot of producers who were, oh skilful I guess you'd say, business people, they would look at the opportunity to expand their operations in the downturn when the prices were down, when cattle values were down, and they would take advantage then of those expansions a year or two later when the markets were up.

And those were very successful operators and I know two or three of them that did very, very well by doing opposite. They used to say they would do opposite of what the government told them. If the government told them to sell out and get out of cattle, they'd get into it. If the government told them it was time to reduce, they would increase. And they were usually quite successful at doing that, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we see changes to this Act as proposed by the government, we wonder then what are these changes, what do these changes mean, and what are these changes mean in as far as an effect on the industry and an effect on the producers within that industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, that becomes the issue. That becomes the issue or one of the issues, I guess you would say, in this Bill.

And one of the issues is, has that government done its homework? Has that government gone out and talked to producers? Has that government gone out and talked to those people who have been identified, that could possibly be affected by the changes in this Act? Have they talked to organizations — livestock organizations, farm organizations, organizations that represent farmers right across the piece? Have they talked to them? Have they got their input? Have they heard from them? Have they listened to them? Most importantly, have they listened to them?

Often, Mr. Speaker, it's been suggested that sometimes government will go out and talk to people but won't necessarily listen to them. And a question here, Mr. Speaker, is: have they listened to them?

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that many of the producers across this great province are members of producer organizations. Some are members of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. Some are members of the Stock Growers Association. But many, many, many are not members of any organization out there. But yet they are key parts of the livestock industry in this great province and when they market their animals it doesn't matter whether they're a member of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association or the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association. It doesn't matter to the check-off.

What matters to the check-off is that animal going through the ring, that animal going through the marketing system will be checked off at a rate of \$1 for the national levy and \$2 for the

federal levy. And there's nobody checking to see if they're a member of any organization. They just take the money. They take the money.

And in the past it was reasonable and fair that that was done because that money would go into the Department of Agriculture revolving fund, or revolving fund held by the Department of Agriculture. And that revolving fund would be only available to support the industry and would be only available to support the industry in a way that was recommended by a board of livestock producers who made up the board, advisory board to the revolving fund — and they were representative of all the producers in Saskatchewan.

All producers in Saskatchewan had the ability to have discussions with either a board member or somebody from the Department of Agriculture to be able to convey their thoughts and their beliefs forward to have influence in the way the money was disbursed. Mr. Speaker, at that we're losing that. We're losing that in this entire process.

So then you begin to wonder if we're losing that, then how broad is going to be the advice to the department and how broad is the advice going to be to the industry to make the necessary changes on an ongoing basis that's going to be in the best interests of the industry? If you have a narrow band of people you talk to, then you're simply going to get a narrow band of ideas and a narrow band of suggestions and not perhaps that that represents the entire industry.

In order to have representation from the entire industry, you need to be able to speak at some point in time to that entire industry. You need to be able to provide a way for the industry to communicate its thoughts, its suggestions, its ideas forward so that they can be well-received and perhaps, Mr. Speaker, implemented if they happen to be something that is in the best interests of the industry. That, Mr. Speaker, we lose.

Through this Act, I see that we're losing it because we're restricting now the ability of those to influence the use of these funds to simply to those who are members of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, the only one organization.

There are many organizations representing cattle producers out there. There are many cattle producers out there who are not members of any organization. So you can see how it narrows down the influence over these funds. It narrows down to just those who are members of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. I think, Mr. Speaker, this is dangerous. I think it's dangerous because you narrow down the scope of influence. You narrow down the scope of ideas that are coming forward. You narrow down the percentage of producers that you talk to. You narrow down the percentage of producers you get feedback from, ideas from. And that, I think, can be detrimental to the industry as a whole.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can't help but think that, in a lot of ways, what we're seeing here is these changes are not necessarily changes that I think the vast majority of people involved in the industry would agree with. I don't know that for sure. And I don't know that the government knows that for sure because there's been no indication as to the level or the degree of consultation this government has done with those people

involved in the livestock industry.

Mr. Speaker, the question that comes to mind is who within the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association will be determining where and when these funds will be allocated? Who within this . . . Now we realize that if this Act, if this Act is proclaimed and implemented, it will then make provisions for the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association to collect the check-off levies.

The question then is, so now the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association will have jurisdiction and influence over these levies, influence over how these levies are disbursed. The question remains who, who within the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association will be determining where and when these funds will be allocated?

There is no suggestion in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, that will address that concern. There is no suggestions here at all. There is nothing in the support information that the government has provided to this Bill that comes anywhere near providing that type of information. The government is sort of saying, well trust me; it'll be looked after. It's like the government is saying to the cattlemen out there, give me your wallet. Give me your funds and trust me. I will spend it on your behalf wisely. Trust me.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we wonder, we wonder, would you do that in your own operation? The simple question is: would you do that in your own operation, whether it be a farm operation or a business or a hardware store or a service station? Would you just turn your money over? Would you turn your wallet over, your chequebook over to somebody because they said, look, I'll disburse your money, and we'll do it wisely? Trust me.

That's basically what this government and this Bill is asking the producers of the livestock industry to do in this great province, is to turn the money over to them, have no say on that money, have no control over that money, have no influence on how that money might be spent. They just said, trust me. We'll spend it wisely.

Mr. Speaker, they're doing so without even telling us, without even telling us who within the Cattlemen's Association will be making that decision, will be making that decision. Who will be giving the advice? Who will be making that decision? On what grounds are they going to have to produce that decision? On what grounds are they going to be required to be able to be informed so they can make a decision and an informed decision, a decision that is, that is in the best interests of the industry?

There is no assurance here of that at all, Mr. Speaker. There is no mechanism here at all to ensure that the producers out there will receive the best benefits for those dollars being spent. There is no mechanism that assures that.

Mr. Speaker, normally, as in the past when the funds were held by the Department of Agriculture in a revolving fund, they were only dispensed after the advice of a board of directors, or a board would advise the department as to how these funds should be disbursed. This board was made up of livestock producers from right across this great province of ours.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if that is going to be — and I'm just saying

if — I can only imagine that the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association would want to probably follow on that same vein. They would want to have advice from the industry as to how this money should be spent. At least I would hope that would be the case. So if that is the case then, if the board is going to be allocating the use of these funds . . . and I would assume that that's what it would be. There would be a board set up to provide the advice to the Cattlemen's Association of how these funds should be disbursed in a way that is in the best interest of the industry.

Then the question . . . It begs the question, what is going to be the makeup of this board? What is going to be the makeup of this board? Is this board going to be made up of livestock producers, people who are actively involved in the industry, the people who are involved in the industry who have everything at stake, therefore they're going to make decisions that are in the best interest of their industry because it in turn makes in the best interest of their own operations?

And these are the people who are conscious of the need to continue to build that industry by attracting young people to the industry to ensure that we have a strong livestock industry for today and for the future, that we have an industry that will be able to survive the market turn down that we're going through now, but to be able to ride the stormy seas of the livestock industry and the livestock prices that's happening right now in the livestock commerce that's going on here with the ups and downs within the industry.

Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we have a board that . . . if that is the mechanism that's going to be used by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. They're going to establish a board, advisory board that would be advising the association as to what would be the best use of those dollars that are being collected through the check-off fund. What's the best use to support the industry, to support the members there, but also to grow the industry and to make it a strong industry so that we have the ability to attract young people to that industry so that it's a continuum of that industry, so it would be a very big part of our economy today and into the future. We don't dare lose that industry.

And what we need to do is to ensure that we have that type of individual on that board that will be able to provide that input, be able to provide that advice, be able to be futuristic and have an idea of what is needed in the future, what changes may be needed as time goes on here to ensure that the industry is positioned, positioned to meet the challenges of the future because there will be challenges. There always will be challenges, and we have to be ready for those challenges. We have to be position to meet those challenges.

[16:00]

A lot of those challenges come about as changing desires and changing demands within the economies of other countries. We export. We export a lot of product. Our beef products and our beef industry, livestock industry here is exported abroad, okay. And those other countries that import our product always have a changing desire within their economies. As their economies grow stronger, you'll see as their economies grow stronger that the demand for their different products change.

As economies grow stronger and the people within those economies have greater disposable income, the first thing that they affect is an improved diet, improved diet. They look at the ability to be able to feed themselves and their families with an improved diet. And as a result of that, what you're seeing, will see, and have seen and will see into the future a change in demand of product being imported from our great country here.

When it comes to the livestock industry, you will see a change in the amount of product being imported to varied countries. In some cases, you will see that in the past — perhaps history will show us — that a significant import by a certain country might have been chicken. Maybe 80 per cent of the imports of this country might have been chicken. But as their economy has grown, and their population starts to benefit from the growth in that economy and they start to have greater disposable income, you will see that they will move away usually from chicken and usually and then next step is into pork, and then as that economy grows and their lifestyle improves and they have greater disposable income, they'll move from pork into beef.

And then you'll see that move also means different cuts of product so that you may start out at one point in time, a significant amount of hamburger perhaps was being imported by a particular country. But as that country's economy grew and the people started to prosper and had a greater degree of disposable income, it might have moved up to roasts and from roasts into steaks, Mr. Speaker, so that you'll see there's a change in demand. And that is why it is important that we have an industry that is positioned to be able to take on these changes and to be able to react to these changes as those changes come about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in order to do that, you have to have research and development. You have to have research and development that's properly funded so that you have the ability for the industry to react as those changes are identified. You have people within the board that's providing the advice of the disbursement of the funds that have the ability to look at the market trends, have the ability to notice that things are changing, and that have the ability then to be able to position the industry in a position to be able to react to those changes so that we can take advantage of it, so we can be leading the marketplace rather than following. So we can be the first one then to provide the product that they want, to provide the quality of product that they want.

That, Mr. Speaker, is part of the wisdom of being able to disburse these funds in a way that best benefit the industry, that best benefit the industry, that ensure that the industry is able to react to the changing marketplace, particularly the international changing marketplace, and to be able to react to those changes not after, not following, but to be able to lead the way, to be there at their doorstep when they want a new product, we have that product available for them and to have that product in a quality that they want.

It's an old saying that a successful marketer simply goes out and finds out what the purchaser wants, finds out what the purchaser is prepared to pay for that particular product, and then supplies it to him, and then supplies it to him. Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that that is the formula for a successful marketing strategy, is that you go out and you talk to those

people who are doing the purchasing. You find out what product they're looking for, what product they're looking for today, and what product will they likely be looking for into the future. And then you find what price they're willing to pay for it. Then you go back and you develop the product of that quality, the quality that they demand, but do it within the ability to market within a price that they're prepared to pay.

And you don't just do that once. You do it on an ongoing basis, the ongoing basis, and that way you simply stay with the changes in the economy and the demand of the economy and the population and other countries will require into the future. That will change, and we have to be there, and we have to be on the leading edge.

And we have to do that through research and development. We have to do that by having people who will disburse the funds that are collected by these check-offs, to do so in a manner that will position the industry to be leading the world, not following. And the industry will be strong and will have the ability to recognize the changes, to be able to be there when those changes are demanded by the countries elsewhere abroad, saying that we want this product now. We're saying okay, here's the product you want. And all of a sudden we become the leaders.

And that, Mr. Speaker, creates a strong industry. That, Mr. Speaker, then creates a strong industry here at home, where then you have the ability to be able to attract young people to that industry so that you can have an industry that will be strong, not only today but an industry that will be strong into the future.

And that, Mr. Speaker, I think is really what governments want. I think government wants to ensure that we have an industry that will be strong, not only today and right through the economic turmoils of today, but will ride through and come out of the end of this much stronger and much younger and much more willing to react to the changing marketplace and react to the changes that are coming forward.

And that is a wise use of the funds that are being deducted through the check-offs of our animals that are being sold through the marketplace. When those deductions are taken off, those fees are taken off and put into a pool that can be used to best benefit the industry, then we are certainly headed in the right direction.

When we're headed in that direction, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to say that we will have a strong economy. When we have a strong economy that comes about because you have the wise use of the money by the industry, that's being collected from the industry, from the producers out there, to ensure that that industry has the ability to grow, the ability to stay strong, has the ability to react to the changing international marketplace — that, Mr. Speaker, certainly has to be key.

There is a significant advantage in having the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association act as a self-regulating body. Is there, Mr. Speaker? That's the question. Is there an advantage to it? Is there a significant advantage to it? If there is, my question is what is the advantage? What is the advantage in having the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association collecting these fees rather than the Department of Agriculture as it was done in the

past?

What is the advantage? That, Mr. Speaker, is missed on me. At least it's missed on me. I haven't been able to find it in the Act. I haven't been able to find it in any of the briefing information that we have been able to receive from the government on this. I haven't been able to find anything that indicated to me what was the advantage. What was the advantage in shifting of the system of collecting of these check-off fees from that of the Department of Agriculture that would hold it in a revolving fund to having Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association now doing the fee collection?

It's been lost on me, and there may be, Mr. Speaker, there very well may be a logical reason for this and a beneficial one to the industry. There could be. I won't say there isn't because I don't know. What I do know is that the government hasn't shown us that. The government hasn't produced any type of information or any documentation that would indicate what was the driving force behind making these changes. How will it benefit the industry in a much more productive way by having the Saskatchewan Construction Association collecting the fees rather than the Department of Agriculture?

There has been no, there has been no — as my colleague said here — there has not only been no compelling argument, there's simply been no argument at all. And that of course is a concern, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know why.

I mean I'd like to know what was the deciding factor that the government said, okay, we're going to make these changes, and here's the reason why. Here's how it's going to better the industry. Here's how it's going to make the industry stronger. Here's how it's going to make the industry have the ability to react to the changing times. Here's how it's going to have the ability to make the industry react to the changing marketplace.

If that information is provided, Mr. Speaker, I will be the very first one to stand on my feet in this Assembly and say that was a wise decision by this government. It was a wise decision. If this government can show me how in the world these changes, these changes are going to better the industry, make the industry stronger, make the industry more appealing to young people to join the industry and to be willing to make the commitment to ride the rough times and take the good times and the rough times and be able to be successful in the industry, then I will be the first to take my hat off and say this government has finally done something right.

But until then, Mr. Speaker, I'm lost for words. I just don't see what significant advantage, what advantage these changes to this Act is going to benefit the industry, Mr. Speaker.

Even ice pellets are falling, Mr. Speaker.

Now any fees or levies charged for licensing and registration and inspection went into the revolving fund, Mr. Speaker, went into the following funds. So when the Department of Agriculture was in charge of collecting the check-off fees, the fees, all the fees or the levies — different terminology I suppose — but the fees or levies that was charged for licensing, for the registration, and for the inspections went into that same revolving fund.

So the money sat there, the money sat there and it grew because of the revenue being collected through the various agencies. And that money was then disbursed only upon the advice of a board of advisors, and that board was made up of livestock producers.

So it was the people on the front lines. The people on the front lines were involved in the industry, who know the industry, who know the reactions of the industry on a day by day basis. They were the ones, under the old system, they were the ones that would advise the Department of Agriculture as to the best expenditures of the funds in that revolving fund — the best expenditures that would affect a positive change, have a positive effect on the industry, cause the industry to be strong and hopefully prosperous.

It would provide the funds in those days when the funds were needed perhaps to be able to bridge the industry for a period of time until the markets returned in a positive way. So that they were available and those decisions were made by a board that was made up of livestock producers.

If this Bill goes through, Mr. Speaker, and these changes take place, we have no idea, we have no idea what mechanism is going to be available to assure that those decisions are still made in the best interests of the producers and it's still made in the best interests of the industry.

What we need here, Mr. Speaker, is some assurance from this government that we will have a system where we'll have, the producers will have the ability to make the decisions as to those recommendations and the use of the funds, so that those recommendations would be made in the best interests, in the best interests of the producers. Because in the best interests of the producers is in the best interest of the industry. And when it's in the best interests of the industry, it's then in turn in the best interests of the economy of this province of which the livestock industry is a very key component, a very large component and a very key component.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again, the smallest of decisions can have a very big influence on the outcome. This is why I say, when you make changes to an Act — this is something I discovered in my brief time in government — was that changing an Act is not a simple thing. It's not a simple thing. It's easy to change, but not easy to change if you want to ensure that the changes are a positive change and not a negative change. Because the way our government system is, it's all interlocked. It's all interlocked. One depends on the other. One is held up by the other. It's sort of the ties that bind, you might say.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you make changes to an Act, you have to be very, very careful of what effects may happen as a result of those changes. It's like a domino. It's a domino effect. If you make a change and you knock one domino over, well you don't know how far and how wide-ranging those effects may be.

And will they will be unintended consequences, unintended consequences as a result of this changes? We hope not, Mr. Speaker. But what we want to ensure is that we have a mechanism here that the government has done its due diligence, that the government has looked into these things; the government has done its research to the best of its ability.

[16:15]

Now the government hasn't got a crystal ball, and the members over there can't see the future any better than anybody else. But government does have access to officials, officials who are very much experienced within the industry, very much versed in the industry and can certainly provide quality, quality advice and quality suggestions as to what the results of certain changes might be.

And it would be, I think, beholden of government to use that advice, to call upon its officials. To use that advice, to make sure that when there is a change to the Act that those changes result in a positive effect to the industry and to the individuals within that industry. We certainly want to avoid any negative effect, any fallout simply because the government hasn't done its homework or they didn't listen to their officials.

Particularly, Mr. Speaker, at this time, at this time in the livestock industry. Because this time in the livestock industry is very susceptible to damage. They're operating on very thin margins. They've had a long period of downturn in cattle prices and livestock prices. They're operating on very thin margins. Many producers have given up the battle, have packed it in, and have left the industry. We've seen a significant number of producers simply leave the industry.

Last, well last fall and as most recently as the last few weeks ago, I've got reports of producers simply selling out their cow herd. I mean, it's just kind of hard to believe that a producer would sell out his cow herd at a time when the cows are just a few weeks or perhaps months from giving birth and the calving process start. But it just got to a point that the producers said, I'm not going through this another year. And they put them on the market.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, I understand some of those cattle went back into the cow herd and I'm glad to see that that happened. Because boy, you know, it's a rare opportunity to be able to get in the industry or be able to expand your cow herd with animals that are good quality animals and are about to reproduce within a few weeks or a month or so.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's changes out there. And we want to ensure the fact that those changes that come about as a result of this Bill are positive changes to the industry, positive changes to the producers out there. They're not negative. Because the industry is very tentative right now. It's struggled for a long time through some very tough times, and we would not want to see some unintended consequences cause an even greater burden on that industry and the ability for that industry to continue to survive in this great province of ours.

Because not only is the livestock industry important to rural Saskatchewan — and it is, it's very important to rural Saskatchewan; it plays a big part in the rural economy — but it's important to the economy of Saskatchewan as a whole. It's important to the economy of Saskatchewan as a whole. It has a very big part to play in our economy right from the farm gate, right to the supermarket shelf, Mr. Speaker.

And there's positive things, positive things as a result of a strong livestock industry in this province. And we want to

ensure that that strength of the livestock industry continues well into the future. In order to ensure that, Mr. Speaker, we need to know that the check-off funds that are being collected on a regular basis through the marketing system are being used, not only wisely, but they're being used in a way that can best affect the livestock industry to ensure that that livestock industry will be able to weather the present economic climate it's in, but be able to thrive and grow and become solid — a strong market and a strong industry — so that it can withstand the turmoils of the marketplace as it will in the future. There will be turmoil in the future.

I mean we're going through some bad times in the livestock industry today. I believe that sooner or later we're going to come out of it. And I believe that we will once again return to the days of a very prosperous livestock industry and that we will have producers out there who will enjoy prosperity. And they should. As they should because it's simply a return on their labour and a return on their investment that they certainly are entitled to. And when they enjoy prosperity, well, Mr. Speaker, the rest of the economy enjoys prosperity. And I believe that we will enjoy that period of time of prosperity in the livestock industry.

And then after that we will once again go into a downturn in the industry and downturn in the revenues being generated within that industry. And we will once again return to thinner margins and a time of producers will have to be very efficient in their operations in order to be able to survive. That's the nature of the business. As I've said, Mr. Speaker, in the past . . . That's always been the nature of the business.

But in the past it was the downturns were very . . . they maybe went very deep but they didn't last very long. There were only one or two years of poorer prices and then we would come back out of that downturn. And after a year or two it'd be at the peak of the marketplace. And we would enjoy some great returns, and again for a year or two and then it would go the other way.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing in today's world, in our industry here today, we're seeing that that downturn has lasted a lot longer than I think any producers ever thought it would. I think it's probably lasted longer than any expert or anybody that was able to predict the future would have predicted that the downturn in the livestock industry would have lasted this long. I'm really, really challenged to suggest that anybody would have been able to look that far into the future and be able to suggest that.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 97 is separating one organization out of a number of other organizations that pay licensing, registration, and inspection fees on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker. So you wonder why. Why would the government decide to select one organization over the other organization or one organization over many organizations in this province that represent the livestock producer?

I simply ask that question, Mr. Speaker. There could be a legitimate reason for it. And I would hope the government would have a legitimate reason. And I would hope the government would come forward with that information and be able to satisfy my curiosity, but more importantly to satisfy the questions being asked by livestock producers across this great

province of ours as to why, why the government has made that decision and why the government decided that they would pick winners and losers, why they would, without fully consulting those people in the industry.

And I say that, Mr. Speaker, with a degree of authority because I believe, I believe that this government has failed to properly consult with the individuals involved in the industry. I say that simply because on my limited ability to do research at this point in time, simply haven't had the time to do it to the degree that I would feel comfortable with, but from the limited research I have been able to do, I've discovered that some producers are in favour of the proposed changes in this Act, some producers. I also find probably an equal number of producers are not satisfied, are not satisfied with the proposed changes in this Act. But what really bothers me is the large, large number of producers that had no idea, that had no idea that these changes were contemplated.

And that, Mr. Speaker, then raises the question as why is the government proposing these changes? Why is the government proposing these changes? Why is the government proposing these changes without first having done a reasonable job of consulting with the industry? A reasonable job of consulting with those producers out there and asking them for their input into making these changes, making the change to move the collection of the check-off fees from the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture to the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. That's basically what it is. That's the major changes that's taking place here, Mr. Speaker. And the question I have is, why is the government doing this? Who asked the government to do this? What was the consultation process they used with the industry, the producers who are paying this bill? Did they talk to them? If they did, who did they talk to and what was the response?

Mr. Speaker, I see no evidence. I see no evidence of that being put forward to provide simple answers, simple answers . . . question to simple questions. So we wonder, we wonder, Mr. Speaker, why is the government doing this? Why is the government doing this? Why is the government doing this? Who is it that has lobbied the government and asked them to make these changes? Who is it that lobbied the government to ask to make these changes, and what was their reasonings behind the changes? Why were they asking? What was the reasons that they wanted these changes to take place?

And my question is: how did the government decide to take this one organization and give it the authority to collect the fees? Why is it that one organization? Why wasn't it another organization? Why didn't they say, well, no we'll pick A instead of B or B instead of C. But why did they pick this one organization? What was the reason? They may be good reasons. They could very well be good reasons, and I would hope that the government would come forward with those reasons so that they could be able to justify the reasonings that they picked for the choosing the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association to be the collectors and the holders, and those would disperse the funds that are being collected through the check-off fees. Why them? Why that organization? Why not some other farm organization? Why not some other livestock organization? So, Mr. Speaker, it's quite simple questions that I would think would be readily able to be answered if there's a good reason

for making these changes.

Mr. Speaker, another question I suppose that comes to mind is what does, say for an example, the Saskatchewan Egg Producers and the Saskatchewan poultry producers, who pay fees and levies into the same revolving fund that the Saskatchewan agriculture is paying into, think of having the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association becoming a self-regulating. Has this consultation taken place? Has the government talked to these various other farm agency organizations in regards to their proposed changes under this Act? Have they talked to the Saskatchewan Egg Producers? Have they? I don't know. There's no indication in this Bill that they have. Certainly no indication in any information that's been provided to us in regards to this Bill. Certainly was not mentioned in the minister's speech, second reading speech.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, my question is the same for the Saskatchewan poultry producers. Were they consulted? Were they consulted? They pay fees also, and they pay levies also. So, Mr. Speaker, were they consulted as to have their input into the decision to make these changes as affected in the Bill? If they were, then my question is, how does this affect them? How do these changes affect their operations? How does this affect the operation of the Saskatchewan Egg Producers? Or does it? Maybe it doesn't. Or how does it affect the operation and the programs of the Saskatchewan poultry producers? Maybe it doesn't. But I don't know that. That's the question I ask, Mr. Speaker.

And I wish that the government would have been forthright enough to supply us with that information so that we would be able to, be able to make a decision unto whether or not to support this Bill, make a decision as whether or not this Bill is credible, whether or not this Bill is doing good work for the livestock producers of this great province and to the agriculture industry as a whole. These changes may be good. These changes may be good. There's no evidence of it though, Mr. Speaker.

And I am suspect to when a change is coming about, being proposed by government, when it's a change for the sake of change, then that scares me. It scares me because my experience in government is that when you change any part of a Bill, it has a domino effect. It has effect on other Bills. It has effect on other pieces of legislation. It has effect on other regulations. And you don't want to have those effects to be negative effects on the industry, whether it be the livestock industry, the poultry industry, or the economy of this great province of ours.

I would hope that government's changes would be that to be a positive change. I would hope that the government would want to make those changes to have a positive effect on the livestock industry, have a positive effect on the agriculture industry of this great province of ours, to have a positive effect on the economy of Saskatchewan. That, Mr. Speaker, I would hope is the underlying thought process of this government. It's just I don't see it. I just don't see it, Mr. Speaker. It may be there. I haven't seen it. It's certainly not indicated in the Bill. It's certainly not indicated in the information the government has provided, certainly not indicated in the minister's speech.

There's no indication, Mr. Speaker, that the due diligence has

been done by this government to ensure that these changes are going to have positive changes on the industry, have a positive effect for the producers within that industry. There is no evidence at all, Mr. Speaker, that this government has done due diligence, that this government has done any degree of consultation. Certainly they haven't listed who they have talked to and what the . . . provided us that information as to who they've talked to and what was the result of those discussions and what was the input, what was the suggestion by the various organizations. Mr. Speaker, it's simply not there.

[16:30]

That, Mr. Speaker, then immediately raises the question why. Why? Why has this government not ensured, through its Bill and its proposed changes to this Bill, why it has not assured that these changes would be changes that would be positive changes to the industry and to ensure that the producers out there would benefit in a positive way and that their industry would be an industry that would grow stronger in time as a result of these changes. That hasn't been. We haven't received that assurance, Mr. Speaker.

That is why it's so important to have control over those who are disbursing the funds that are being collected through the check-off funds, that are being collected each and every day, in this great province of ours, through our marketing agencies. And that is the \$1 non-refundable national fee that's being collected, as well as the \$2 refundable provincial fee that's also being collected at the marketplace on cattle that are being sold in this great province of ours. And that fund, that money goes into a fund that is designed to be supportive of the industry.

And that fund in the past was a fund that was held in a revolving fund. It was held by the Department of Agriculture, would only be disbursed after the department received advice and direction from a board that was made up of producers who knew what the industry needed. That, Mr. Speaker, we have no suggestion and no evidence that that principle is going to continue under the new proposal of having the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association collecting the funds and disbursing those funds. We have no assurance that those funds will be disbursed only after, only after the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association receives advice from a board that is made up of producers, livestock producers in this great province. We have no assurance of that, Mr. Speaker.

We have no assurance of how those funds will be used. We have no assurance, Mr. Speaker, that those funds will not be used for day-to-day operation of the Cattlemen's Association. We have no assurance of that. We don't know. Perhaps the money that's being collected from the producers across this great province of ours that was initially intended to be funds that they'd use to support the industry, to broaden the industry, to strengthen the industry to be used by reinvesting into the industry . . . We have no assurance that, once the system changes and the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association collect these fees, that these fees will still be used in that same way. We're assuming they would be and we hope they would be, but we have no assurance of that, Mr. Speaker. We have no assurance that those funds will be used in the same way, or perhaps some of those funds being used to support the day-to-day operation of that particular organization. We have

no assurance of that, Mr. Speaker.

And that is just one of the many gaps, I guess you would say, that we have identified in this Bill. This Bill is the sort of a Bill that says, trust me. You know? Give me your money, and I will spend it in your best interest. Trust me.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a problem suggesting that this government can be trusted with spending anybody's money. It's interesting that the people across this great province is now starting to realize the same, starting to realize that this government maybe can't be trusted in spending their money. We're seeing most recently a government decision to take \$200, taxpayers' dollars, per every man, woman, and child in this province, and plunk it back into the potash industry. So, Mr. Speaker, that causes a lot of people to wonder if they can trust this government in spending their tax dollars.

So when this government says, well we'll introduce a Bill to the producers, livestock producers here, that will cause the collection of their fees that they are already used to being collected and they have always in the past gone to good purposes, these fees now being collected and being given to an organization that really we have no assurance of how those fees are going to be disbursed and whether or not they're really going to be disbursed in the best interest of the producer or best interest of the industry as a whole . . . We have no assurance from this government that that will happen. We have no assurance from this government that those fees won't be simply used to cover the costs of operation of the agency on a day-by-day basis.

So there's a lot of questions, Mr. Speaker, that will come about as the deeper we look into this Bill and the deeper we dig into this Bill. I suppose another question that comes to mind is that what other producer organizations want to be self regulated as well? What other producer organizations that are existing in this province today and have operated perhaps quite well under the old system are going to say, well if you're going to allow the Cattlemen's Association to cut these fees and sort of become a self-regulated organization, then perhaps our organization would want to move in that direction.

And is the government prepared to approach the other farm organizations and work with them to facilitate that particular purpose? After all, that's what the government seems to have done with the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association in regards to the collection of the fees in this system that they are now proposing here, Mr. Speaker. So you can't help but wonder about all the questions that are being raised from this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

And again I go back to the principle of government. The principle of government is to (a) make changes to have the best effect for the people of this province, to make changes to strengthen industries, to make changes to strengthen organizations, to make changes to strengthen the economy so that individuals can enjoy a reasonable prosperity in this great province of ours. And that should be the role of government. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that is the desire by any government of any political stripe. And I think that's what any government would desire.

The question here, Mr. Speaker, is how do you go about achieving that? Which road do you use to achieve that? I think the goals are pretty well all the same. It's the matter of what road do you use to achieve those ends. What method do you use to provide that opportunity of prosperity.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we had in the past, in this particular case, a past system that was proven, a system that worked quite well. It was proven that the Department of Agriculture, through its officials and through its inspectors across this great province of ours, would be able to collect a check-off fee from livestock producers who sold their livestock within our marketing system. That fee of course was a \$1 national fee, a non-refundable national fee, and a \$2 refundable provincial fee.

And that money was held in a revolving fund in the Department of Agriculture. And that money was held there to be used to strengthen the industry, to be reinvested in the industry, to be reinvested in a way that would strengthen the industry. And that was the guiding principle of the board that would make the advice as to the dispensing of those funds.

That board, Mr. Speaker, was made up of livestock producers from all corners of this province. And that board was made up of livestock producers from all corners of this province and it was the livestock industry as we know it in Saskatchewan. And they would make advice . . . and they would give their advice, I should say, in to the Department of Agriculture in a method that would ensure that the distribution of the funds from that fund would result in nothing but a positive effect on the industry.

There was times when the industry needed help. There was times when the industry needed bridging. There was times when the industry would need a lobby, and those funds were available there to meet those needs. And those individuals sitting on that board would make those decisions, and they would make those decisions so that the industry would be able to survive the tough times, would be able to prosper in the good times, but would be able to strengthen itself to be a strong industry and be a key part of our economy.

But it would be an industry that would be able to attract new people to it because you can't have an industry that doesn't have the ability to rebuild itself. And that rebuilding has to go on on an ongoing basis. In order to do that, you have to have young people coming on stream each and every year as producers move along. As producers retire, some simply sell out their operations. Others pass it on to their younger generations. That attracts young people into the industry, and that's what keeps the industry young and strong. It keeps young people coming in, a good mixture on an ongoing basis at any time.

If you took a cross-section of the industry, you'd see on the outside you have a lot of youth that are full of enthusiasm and vigour and determination for the future. You see in the centre a very mature group of individuals who have had a lot of experience in the industry. And they have experienced the good times; they've experienced the bad times. They've come through them both, and they are much better off for it.

Then you have the seniors who've been there a long time. They're looking at getting out of the industry. They're retiring.

Not necessarily dispersing of the herd because they're passing it on to other generations to take over the farming operation and the livestock operation. So, Mr. Speaker, and in some cases, yes; in some cases, Mr. Speaker, it is a dispersal. They simply don't have family to pass it on to, or the family perhaps isn't interested in pursuing the livestock industry. So it is a dispersal.

And usually what you would find in any given normal circumstances when a herd, a breeding herd is dispersed, it would of course, it would be the cull cows, the old ones that, you know, have survived or have gone through their productive years and are certainly getting up to the point where they're no longer as productive as they were. So they'd likely go on to slaughter.

But the young, solid breeding stock would usually be going back into the cow herd, and back into the cow herd of the province to continue to maintain a strong and growing cow herd. That, Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen. We haven't seen that in the last couple of years. And we're seeing producers, rather than getting into the industry, we're seeing producers moving out of the industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important, very important that we ensure that we have a mechanism here in place that we will make the right decisions to ensure that our industry, our livestock industry will continue to survive.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's a saying that when things are going good, you can afford to make a mistake; when things are going real good, you can afford to make a bad mistake. Mr. Speaker, today in our producer and our agriculture economy and in our livestock industry, things are not as good as they once were.

We're seeing our livestock industry here that is under stress and has been under stress for some time. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, we don't dare make a bad decision. We don't dare make the wrong decision because our livestock industry is very sensitive right now and it is tentative. And a wrong decision could be disastrous for the economy, for the industry.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we want to do is ensure that the government — in its process, in its decision to make changes according to Bill 97, to make these changes — we want to ensure that the government has made the right decision, and not the decision that is going to hurt the industry. Presently the industry is sensitive to changes. It is sensitive. It is tentative because of a long period of time that they've gone through some tough economic situations. The prices simply haven't been there.

As a result of that, we're seeing, we're seeing producers leaving the industry. We're seeing, in some cases, Mr. Speaker, producers are getting out of the industry simply because it's time for them to retire. And they don't have anybody to pass on their operation to, or those who are taking over their operation certainly aren't interested in continuing in the livestock industry.

And though they're making that decision to disperse their cow herd, and to do so, in some cases, this winter. And when that happens, Mr. Speaker, we see that most of those cows are going to slaughter. Most recently some have simply gone back into

the cow herd because they're close to reproducing, and that's certainly opportunity there to our producer, who is the business, to be able to take off a few extra head and maybe make an extra dollar or two this fall. And that's good and we're pleased to see that. And we hope that more cows would go into the cow herd, and we would see a stop to the declining cow herd that we have in this great province, although unfortunately that hasn't been our experience over the last two or three years.

It's been simply a steady downturn or decline of the cow herd population in Saskatchewan. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why it is so important, so important that these changes, Mr. Speaker, don't have a negative effect on that industry. It's why it's so important that the funds that are being collected here through the check-offs — the \$1 that's being collected as a result of the federal check-off and the \$2 that's being collected as a result of the provincial levy — that, although refundable, I don't think too many producers have ever really applied to have it refunded.

[16:45]

It's so important that these funds, Mr. Speaker, are used in the best interests, in the best way possible to support the industry, to support the industry. The time when the industry has gone through a long period of tough times, it's very sensitive, very fragile. And what we need to do is be assured that we have the ability to support that industry so that it continues to survive this downturn in the economy, like stock prices, so it survives it in a way that will allow those producers to continue to exist and allow the industry to continue to exist and to come out of this downturn in the agricultural prices and livestock prices, come out of this. And I believe it will. I believe it will come out of it, and I think, I'm hoping that we're closer to coming out than we've ever been.

But when it does come out, that we want to ensure the decisions that are being made today are the decisions that will best support that industry to ensure that that industry comes out of it stronger, comes out of it stronger than it was when it went into it.

We want to ensure that there's opportunity there, for young people who would like to get involved in the industry, the opportunity for them to get involved in the industry. But an opportunity for them to even see a profit, a way of making a profit in the industry — not just a living, not just being able to survive in the industry and to do a lot of work and a lot of investment simply to survive. We want to see the ability for individuals to be able to get involved in the industry and be able to enjoy their time in the industry because they are making a profit. They're making a reasonable living.

I don't think, Mr. Speaker, if you've already talked to a cattleman anywhere in this province, or a cattleman anyplace, that they will suggest for one moment that many of their friends or their colleagues in the industry have ever become millionaires because I don't think that's the case. But I do think that it's fair and reasonable to expect that if you're in that industry that you should be able to make a reasonable living, make a reasonable living.

And you do so because it is not handed to you. It is not

something that you just do by pushing a button. It takes a lot of hard work, a lot of commitment, a lot of wise decision and good management decisions to be able to ensure that your operation is that of a strong operation that produces a profit.

Profit is required. You have to make a profit because that money has to be reinvested in the industry. It's no different than anything else. It's no different than running a hardware store or running a grocery store or gas station. You have to make a profit. You have to make a profit to pay the bills. You have to be able to make a profit to be able to pay your own wages. You have to be able to make a profit in order to reinvest it into the operation to keep it up. And there's nothing wrong with making a profit, Mr. Speaker, okay?

Like I said, I don't think that there's too many producers out there that complain at all about the check-off fees. I have yet to hear a producer complain about the check-off fees, to complain about the dollar that's being taken off on the national levy or the \$2 that's refundable under the provincial levy. They don't complain about it.

But they do want to know though, they do want to know that their money — because that's what it is; it is their money — they want to know that their money is going to be spent wisely. They want to know that their money is going to be spent in a way that is going to support their industry. They want to know that their money is going to be spent in a way that's going to strengthen their industry. They want to know that their money is going to be spent in a way that's going to cause the industry to survive and to be a strong and a prosperous industry for them and for the future's generations who, they hope, will be attracted to the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that's too much to ask. I don't think that that's too much to ask at all. I think, Mr. Speaker, though that it's fair to say that the experience of the former mechanism of handling the check-off fees was a positive experience. It was an experience where the Department of Agriculture collected the fees. The Department of Agriculture held it in a revolving fund. And that money was disbursed from this fund only after, only after the Department of Agriculture received advice from their advisory board that was made up of livestock producers.

Livestock producers from all corners of this province sat on that board. They would discuss the issues of the day. They would discuss the issues facing the industry. They would have access to information. They would have access to advice, to market trends, advice to economic changes in other countries that were major importing countries that imported our product. And then they would make decisions as to what would be the best expenditure of these funds that would support our industry; how could these funds best be used to support the livestock industry here in Saskatchewan.

Once they reached that decision, they would take that advice and they would pass it on to the Department of Agriculture. And they'd say, this is what we recommend. This is how the money is to be spent. This is how the money is to be disbursed. The Department of Agriculture will simply follow their recommendations, will simply take the advice of the people who know the industry, the advice of the people who know the

province.

And they would use that advice to disburse the funds that would then be, would then have a positive effect on the industry, would be used in a way that would support the industry, be used in a way that would cause the industry to, in tough times to survive, but in more prosperous times to grow, to become larger, to become stronger, to become more efficient and more effective and to be attractive to the younger producers and therefore have younger producers joining the industry.

And when younger producers join the industry, you have renewed enthusiasm, you have renewed strength, you have renewed vision. You have hope and hope springs eternal. And, Mr. Speaker, you have a strong industry because you have a good mixture. You have a good mixture of people involved in the industry. Young, enthusiastic, vibrant, vigorous.

You have more mature people who have been around a while, have some experience in the industry, still have the desire, still have the strength and the willingness to see that the industry is an industry of growth. And they have the experience of the past. They know the mistakes they've made and they're prepared to share that with others in the industry so that often we don't have to repeat the same mistake over and over again.

And then you have those who have been in the industry a long time, who are looking at retirement and are looking at being able to pass on their operation that they've spent a lifetime, they've spent a lifetime of commitment to building that operation. They've put their heart, their soul into it. It's been a labour of love. And they now see a nice operation that's very efficient and very effective and been able to adapt to the changing times, and they're seeing the ability now in many cases, looking at the ability to pass this on to future generations in their family who are taking over and who are going to be a part of that operation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think there's a reward in that in itself. It may not be a financial reward, but certainly a reward to be able to spend a lifetime working in an industry, building up an operation — an operation that is quite efficient and quite effective and very smooth and a very, very well run operation — and have the ability to pass that on to your son or your daughter or some other relative within the family who has certainly showed the interest and the desire to keep it up and to move forward with it.

I think, Mr. Speaker, there's a reward in that in itself. And in some cases you'll find that, you know, the producer has now reached the age of retirement, and he's looking at the ability to retire and perhaps retire in some degree of comfort, and doesn't have the ability to pass it on because there's no one in his family who is interested in continuing on in the livestock industry. And that's the case. Not always do we have an automatic passing on from generation to generation. It's no different in the livestock industry than in any other thing. Our sons and daughters all develop their own interests and their own ideas and their own desires, and they go off on their own way — most of them quite successfully, I might add.

So you see, the producer then simply puts his livestock herd up for dispersal. Usually what will be done is that the producer

himself will cull the herd, will take out those older animals who are past reproductive cycle, will take out those who are perhaps experiencing some health problems or may not be as strong as they should be, and disperse them as cull animals, and save the bulk of the breeding stock that are good quality animals that have the ability to produce and produce for a number of years to come. And these will be put into the system, whether it be usually purchased by locals through the auction ring and put back into their own cow herd, expanding the cow herd or perhaps replacing culls of their own.

But it's gratifying to see that those animals go back into the productive cycle and not gone off to market someplace because, having been involved in that industry for some time it's a little hurtful to see good, solid, young cows that have years of production ahead of them and can bring you a good quality animal, and that quality animal could then be sold into the marketplace and the fees could be collected from that animal to go to support the industry. Those fees of course being the fees that would be collected by the federal check-off fee, a levy of \$1 or the levy of \$2 being collected by the province that is now going to be, as a result of this Bill, will be collected by the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association.

And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the government has decided to go in this direction. I really wonder, what was the motivating factor behind that government's decision? I wonder what was the . . . who was the organization that approached the government and asked for these changes? Or was it an organization or was it individuals or was it a group of individuals or was it a group of organizations that wanted these changes?

I'm not saying these changes won't in the long run be good. They could very well be good for the industry. I don't know. And I don't see any evidence either in the Bill or in the copy of the minister's speech here in the House that would indicate that the government has been lobbied by any particular group or individuals that would cause such changes to take place.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is I think beholden upon government to be able to answer some of those questions, some of the very simple questions that we've put forward and those questions simply being, you know, why is the government making these changes? Who asked for these changes? What was the purpose of these changes? And, Mr. Speaker, who was the driving force behind making these changes? And what research did the government do to ensure that these changes are positive changes and are positive on behalf of the industry? And I'm sure many of my colleagues across the way would like to ask their minister that very same question too, is who was it that wanted these changes? What was the motivating factor behind the government's decision to bring these changes through on this particular Bill?

Because as you note by the title of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, it has a wide-ranging effect. I mean it affects a lot of Acts. It affects *The Agri-Food Act* of 2004 and the repeal Act of 1998 and the marketing deductions regulations of 2004. So it affects a wide range of Acts.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's certainly many, many more questions that I would have of the government on this particular Bill, and

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's safe to say that the government has been reluctant to come forward with a lot of the answers that I would have hoped the government would have used to support their argument for these changes.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that many of my colleagues might also have questions that they would like me to ask and I think that we will need to certainly ask those questions in order to ensure that the government has done its due diligence. And I don't believe that this government has done its due diligence. I don't believe this government has done a reasonable job of consulting with the industry or the stakeholders within the industry. And we would like to have some assurance, Mr. Speaker, that this government has done its due diligence, that it has talked to the producers out there, and that there are good reasons behind their wanting to make the necessary changes here as outlined in Bill 97.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of those questions that the government has failed to provide answers for, whether that be in the Bill itself . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It now being 5 p.m., this Assembly will stand recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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