



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

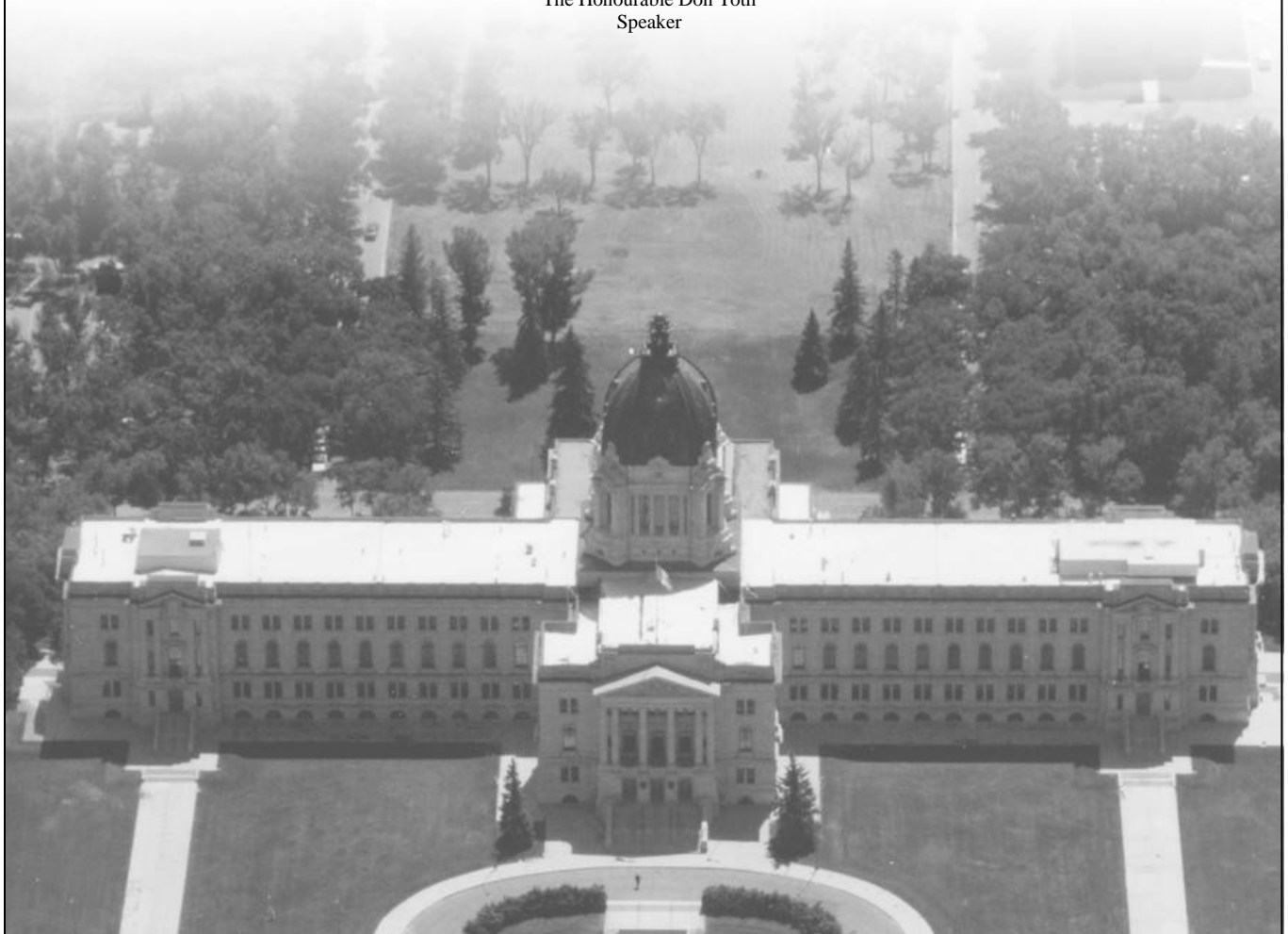
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 110 — *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*
(continued)**

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — It now being 7 o'clock, debate will resume on Bill No. 110. The member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to resume debate on this very important Bill that is before us. And it's good to see you in the Chair. I may have to review some of the things because I know when you are back there you may not hear all the things I was talking about. And I know that while you are somewhat northerly of here, you're not in the true North. But it is good to see you in the Chair.

And I will take this opportunity to say hello to the people who are joining us in the evening here because this is an important time where many people miss out because they're at work or whatever, and they don't get to hear the debates live. And I do know that they can see them on the Internet and on TV at their repeats but, you know, I think people especially as they get looking forward to tomorrow with the budget, and we are all kind of anxious about that, we have some big concerns about that, in particular related to this Bill, Bill 110, *An Act respecting Local Government in Northern Saskatchewan and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. Of course there will be consequential amendments, and of course we're talking about the consequences of this Act.

And we're looking forward to it. We agree to it in principle, but we do have some concerns about the unintended consequences. We always like to think we can predict in a perfect world what will be the outcomes, but we know that that isn't always the case. And unfortunately we've seen that kind of thing happening here in Saskatchewan. Just these two short years where we thought that with the government left with some \$2.3 billion they could be doing so much more, and particularly for the folks of the North.

And they have some serious questions because, as I was saying earlier, a Bill like this — and it's pretty substantial; it's a very significant Bill, hundreds of pages; what is it, almost 200 pages, 210? — can have a huge impact on the municipalities in the North as they take over more authority of their work.

And of course we think that is right and appropriate, but the big question at this time is, do they have the resources, the capacity to do that? And if anything, they probably need the support more than ever because of course that is at least half the province, and half the province sits in a very pristine state. It's a part of the province that we all hold near and dear, we're very, very proud of simply because it's such a beautiful part of our

province with the forests. It attracts people from all over the world. It's a beautiful, beautiful part of our province. And one of the things we're extremely proud of, extremely proud of is the 100,000 lakes, most of which, by far most of which are in the North.

And we know there are challenges, huge challenges facing the municipalities of the North. These are unique challenges that southerners don't face in the same, same way. In the South the land has all been surveyed. We've gone through a period of time where the settlement's pretty far advanced pretty much throughout. That's been both a blessing and a curse.

The curse is, of course, that when we try to have land protected, it's been pretty tough. And we think about the grasslands, trying to get a significant piece of grassland together to protect through wildlife habitat protected Act. This is a challenge.

And so we have an opportunity in the North to help the people of the North acquire the quality of life that they deserve and that they aspire to, that they have hopes for their families, their children, and their elders. But they also have a very special unique connection with the land. They see that land as a real resource. And whether it's fishing, and it's one that's a very important part of their culture, but also in terms of their economy, and we've seen that deteriorate over the course of time. Whether it's forestry, and we see a government that has done very little to support forestry and that type of thing in the Far North.

So we see the opportunities in resources. And we have some real questions about the oil sands. And we see . . . How is this government going to assist the northern municipalities as they take their rightful place?

So we have some real questions. The questions I was raising before, earlier in the day, was the connection they have, the municipalities have with the Ministry of Environment. And I draw on some experience from my former experience with Environment, thinking about the way that the municipalities in the North would look to the department, now Ministry of Environment, in so many different ways, in so many ways in true partnerships. And I know the New North had referenced that and they looked for stronger partnerships.

But it is a question when I hear and see the minister's remarks, opening remarks, that he neglects to mention the role of the Ministry of Environment and what their responsibility will be in this because clearly they will have a large, a large part to play in the success of northern municipalities. And in fact in many ways, Environment plays a very large role, perhaps the largest of any just because of its unique connections with the people in the North. Of course, there is Health and Education, of course Highways because there's concerns about roads and also the lack of roads, but Environment plays a big, big part.

And just to review some of the things that I was talking about earlier, the things that I was talking about was particularly around waste management both in terms of how do you deal with landfills and all of that, and the responsibility and maintenance of that. But the issue is about the areas around recycling and how do you deal with the reduction of materials

going into landfills. And of course it is a struggle for the folks up north.

Water is a huge issue. I mean as I said earlier, talking about the 100,000 lakes but ironically the question of clean water, clean drinking water, is a challenge that we all face. And it's one that's not just unique to the South but it's also important to the folks in the North. How do you have a continuous, a dependable supply of water, and what will be the role of this government in that?

And of course as I said earlier and I continue to make this comment, that I am worried about tomorrow's budget and the impact on this particular Bill if there are not the resources and the tools that go along with it. There are some very, very serious concerns and worries that if this Bill is stranded without the resources necessary to make it happen, then we've let down the people of the North yet once more. And we cannot afford to do this. I think the northerners are looking for this in a major, major way, and yet this government, through its mismanagement . . . When they came to power — we all know this story very well — but they were left with \$2.3 billion, \$2.3 billion. And what have they done with it, particularly in the North?

And this, you know, the question is, is this related? Clearly it's related. Clearly it's related to making sure this Bill comes to life because this is all about governance in the North. And if you do not have the resources to make it come to life then truly there will be some questions. And they'll be asking questions about this. Because they'll feel let down and betrayed and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they'll feel doubly betrayed if we take the cop-out to say hey, that Bill doesn't need any resources. We all know it needs resources. We all know it needs resources. It truly, truly does.

For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in fact the minister himself talked about stray dogs. He was the one who brought up stray dogs. He brought up stray dogs. Dangerous animals. In fact it's referred to in the legislation. It is referred to. You just cannot say that it's all by itself. They need resources.

And we saw and we heard and we all felt the pain of the family in Ile-a-la-Crosse when a child was lost this winter because of dangerous animals. This was really a tragedy, and we know that everyone in the community felt badly, extremely at a loss for what more could have been done. But we know what could have been done more was more resources to ensure the dangerous animals are looked after, that that issue is looked after.

So this is an important aspect of it. You cannot write a piece of legislation and say it stands alone by itself. And the northerners have felt betrayed by it so many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we have not provided the resources for that. And this is one more time where I feel that we will be, we should be held accountable and this government on that side should be held accountable if they do not deliver the resources to make this Bill come alive for the people in the North.

And we also talked a little bit about my experiences in the North in regards to labour and how when we implemented the changes . . . And my colleague from Regina, Regina Northeast,

talked eloquently about his work up there and how important it is to consult with the local leadership, and his experiences and how that shaped his feelings about the North. And we relied heavily on that, heavily on his good work, and understanding the unique qualities of what happens in the North. That's what consultations are all about. It's all about getting it right. It's all about getting it right. And we got it right. And there was a good reason we got it right.

As the colleague from Regina Northeast, and we have to thank him and then . . . Because it's all about getting it right, but more than that, he would be the first one . . . It's all about getting it fair. Because that's what people want, to be treated fairly, and that's what's so important about this piece of legislation, to making sure it's fair for the people of the North, recognizing their unique characteristics.

And of course yes, we had some real questions and we continue to have questions that the minister . . . Now I understand that through his consultations, people asked about the criminal record check. He put it in and then he said, let's put it right across the board for everyone that's elected or seeking election at the municipal level.

But we have questions. So why stop there? Why isn't it happening at the provincial level? And of course different levels of criminal records you could have as well. What are the ethics behind it? We're not hearing much about that.

Clearly we need to know more about this because while there is I think a reasonable need to know, we have to also be careful that where we start to encroach on people's privacy and we start to discourage people who should be good candidates and unfortunately encourage those who can get around the rules because the rules haven't been well thought out. And of course that is or could be one of the unintended consequences. This is a major concern that I have because it's a big one. It's a big change. It's signalling a change and I'm not sure how this will play out in the long run.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier — and I just would like the opportunity to repeat this one more time for the folks who are just tuning in this evening — that we think that there are some concerns and we will be watching this very, very carefully.

So as we go through this, I know that there are some questions that I have. And I'm going to be wrapping up my remarks pretty soon here because I have . . . Well this is an interesting topic, but I think that I know others would like to have a chance to talk about it as well. And I think that, while I have explained at length about the environment aspect of it, about the forest fire aspect of it, how important that is, the interconnection with the municipalities, the northern municipalities and the Department of Environment, and how we seek to protect those who are in the North, that's hugely important. And so forest fires are a really important one. The roads, huge; the waste management plan.

The other one that I would like to hear a little bit more, and we just started to talk a little bit about this before, was about the squatters that are in the North. How are they fitting into this piece of legislation? Has the minister considered the squatters

that are in the North? And there are literally hundreds of squatters and that are in places where . . . Well we know that they're there. But how does this all fit in? How does this fit in?

But I did want to say and I did want to take this opportunity in the North, that I was struck by my colleague's comments, my colleague from Athabasca who noted that sometimes the voter turnout, I think, is it 75, 85, 95 per cent? Up to 95 per cent turnout. If only we had that kind of turnout in the South.

[19:15]

I was thinking about my city, the city of Saskatoon, where the turnout is something like 27 per cent — 27 per cent — and I think they do a pretty good job. But why is it that the North can do such a fantastic job of getting their people out? They truly do believe in their people. They get out and they support their people and hopefully that they'll have the capacity to take that one step further with the capacity to make this piece of legislation come to life through the resources and the tools that they need.

It will be just a real shame if this is one of those fancy pieces of legislation from the South that we trot up north and say, hey this is what you wanted. But they need and they've asked for and they deserve so much more. And the capacity — whether it's in environmental protection, whether that's landfills, waste management, water, or whether it's around working with a species at risk, or forest management, all of that — it's a huge, huge piece. And all of this ties together, yes, and we have to make sure that there's a duty to consult and that it's done appropriately on the issues that need to be done. Meaningfully. Absolutely meaningfully.

And so if this is not taking place, then we have some real questions. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish I could say that I feel really comfortable with the government in their ability to take this forward, to steward this through. But I have to say that through pieces of legislation that I've become familiar with, I have some serious questions.

This is one that I think we'll have some good discussions in committee about and there'll be some good speeches about because clearly we cannot, we cannot make the assumptions that this government is going to do the right thing. In fact, can they do the right thing? That is the question. Do they even have the capacity to do the right thing?

We see the mismanagement here on some pretty basic things, as I've said right from the very beginning. You know, having \$2.3 billion to start out with, and now we're here with a \$1 billion deficit. It just bodes not very well for success, particularly when it comes to other areas.

And I know, for example, the Minister of Environment, and she quite freely admits to breaking a major campaign promise about climate change, a major promise which has huge impacts. And today I was talking about this earlier, and when we reflected on what was happening in Manitoba. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is quite a hike away from where you are from, but where the roads are starting to thaw and several people have been stranded. And the communities in the North are actually kind of wondering what's going to happen because they are without

supplies for a whole summer season. And there are some real questions.

So when promises like climate change are broken, it really hurts communities in the North directly. There is a direct line between what is said in this House, the energy that's put into keeping promises, and what happens in the North in communities like Fond-du-Lac, La Loche, and Stony Rapids. Clearly more attention needs to be done. More attention needs to be paid to keeping promises. And the first promise that I would hope these folk would keep and that this minister would keep is to provide resources for Bill 110, *An Act respecting local government in Northern Saskatchewan and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. We are looking forward to that.

And while we've seen the consultations, there are some questions that we'll have. This is so important that it's done appropriately, and of course we'll be looking for this tomorrow. So I'll be wrapping up my comments pretty quickly, and we'll be looking for further speakers to speak on this issue. I'll be looking forward to that because I think we've had some excellent speeches up to this point. But at this point, I would like to move adjournment of Bill 110, *An Act respecting Local Government in Northern Saskatchewan and making consequential amendments to other Acts*. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — The member has moved adjournment on this Bill. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Carried.

Bill No. 111

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 111** — *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009/Loi de 2009 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009* be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed it's my pleasure to speak about this very Bill and the North and the very many things that it affects because if ever there's a part of our province that really does need support, administrative support for its municipal governance, it would be the North. It absolutely is a beautiful part of the province that requires both administrative support in terms of the municipal Act, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it would require dollars.

In the North they've set up actually a mirror operation to our . . . Maybe that's overstating it, but we have SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], the Saskatchewan rural municipalities organization. And in the North they have the New North, so they're really working collaboratively and collectively together to try and really put

wheels underneath some of the needs that they have in northern Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, the needs are just immense. The needs are unique in a great many ways.

We get all bent out of shape in the South if a road washes out and we have to go an extra 3 kilometres or 13 kilometres or 23 kilometres, whatever the amount. But the reality of northern Saskatchewan is simply that there's typically one road into a community and it's the same road out. And in fact if you look at today's *Leader-Post*, in northern Manitoba, which in many ways is similar to parts of northern Saskatchewan in this respect, they're really concerned with all-weather roads. They're really concerned with global warming.

The winter ice road didn't last as long. It didn't come in as quick as it should have. They couldn't get the heavy trucks and supplies across the winter road, and so there's communities that are — not to put too fine a point on it, Mr. Speaker — but between a rock and a hard place. They're just really in bad shape in terms of getting any of the supplies that will see them through the coming year. And of course when the winter road doesn't come in, you know, you might have to airlift some supplies in and that just drives cost astronomically high.

So the North, I mean, its very strengths — its vastness, its beauty, its forest, its tundra, its rocks, its lakes, its rivers and streams — but the vastness of the North is much of the beauty, but it also is in some ways their very worst enemy. And it makes it very difficult when you have a relatively, to the rest of Canada and the rest of southern Saskatchewan, you have a relatively sparse population in the North, and yet people expect the same goods and services and particularly services like you would expect to have: the right to have a road, a road that you can travel on; a road that's open all year round as far that is reasonably possible. And I am quick to point out, we don't even enjoy necessarily that in Regina because we've had occasions when No. 1 Highway is closed in the wintertime because of a blizzard and icing conditions and that sort of temporary tragedies.

So nobody really can expect any road to be guaranteed to be open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. But I think in the North, as in the South, we expect our roads to be reasonably open as good as we can possibly keep them open, and roads have to be passable. And the history of the North is not one of having terrifically passable roads all the time.

There is tremendous obstacles to overcome in opening up new roads. It is a very, very difficult thing to do in the North. And then you have to improve on that roadbed in many cases for years and sometimes decades before you get the base solid enough that you actually have a good roadbed. And interesting enough, in other places in the North you build a road and it's sort of there forever. You know, there's not much grief in that.

But whether you're in a place where the road is great or where it needs constant work, you still have to join that road to get that umbilical cord, that thread, up to the extreme North or to keep expanding the horizons, if I can describe it that way. And we like to think of the North, Mr. Speaker, as a place that we are opening up.

We like to think that, you know, we've got mines in the North

and mines in operation, new mines coming on stream. We like to think that the mines that exist in northern Saskatchewan today aren't the be-all and end-all. You know, we for the most part welcome the mining activity, certainly welcome the jobs that go with it for northerners and people from everywhere. But I think it's safe to say that government and opposition are optimistic that there's going to be more mines opening up in northern Saskatchewan in the years and decades to come. We don't think we've seen the end of mining by any stretch of the imagination.

We clearly need better roads in the North and that's just a constant struggle. I know my two colleagues from the two northern constituencies have raised highways repeatedly and other northern issues repeatedly. And I know that they're very passionate about the North. They're very passionate about their constituents. They're very, very passionate about the future of the North, but they're also very quick to acknowledge that there are special and extreme challenges.

One of the challenges that I know that northern municipalities and northerners in any community and even if you're not in a community, the hard fact is that there are wild dog packs in the North. It's a different sort of milieu that dogs come out of there, and we read all too often about maulings, about usually a child that's been mauled. Sometimes the . . . well always the consequences are terrible. Sometimes they're almost unspeakable because sometimes they result in death, and what a tragedy that is. And we've all heard different municipal leaders from the North speaking about the need to deal with it. Occasionally we'll hear some good news stories. I understand there's a veterinary group that goes up to some of the communities in the North and are trying a spaying and . . . I shouldn't say . . .

An Hon. Member: — Spaying and neutering.

Mr. Trew: — Yes, but I'm not sure it's spaying and neutering. I think they . . . My colleague says spaying and neutering. I think they're attacking one gender of dog more so than the other. But the fact is that they're volunteering and going up and trying in their own way, in the way they best know how, to help northern communities deal with a problem that we just can't truly understand when we come from the South.

We know that we've got a stray dog Act. And heavens, if there's a stray dog roaming around my neighbourhood, chances are it's somebody's pet. And you'll try, if it's friendly, you approach the dog, get it and read the tag or see if you can recognize it and help it find its home before the dog gets hurt. That's typically where we are.

And if it's a larger or an angry dog, it's a straightforward thing. We just call for other help and we let the professionals capture the dog, assume it'll go to the pound. And it'll be dealt with, where the owners can either come and pay for the getting out of the pound charge and whatever other penalties there are. But hopefully it will help them keep their dog at bay, keep the dog in their yard, or you know, tie it up, or handle it in a more socially acceptable way for the rest of us.

[19:30]

Because the last thing that we would tolerate in a city or even in most towns, increasingly in Saskatchewan, one of the last things we would tolerate is dogs that we couldn't trust to behave, dogs that run in packs. Because I know from my farm experience that when you get dogs running in packs, they can be incredibly vicious and develop a sort of a mind all of their own.

So the municipalities really have to work as diligently as they can to deal with some of the extraordinary problems that face the North. The municipalities in the North, Mr. Speaker, are begging — that may be the wrong word to use — but they're reaching out to each other through the New North, the umbrella organization where they look for collaborative ways to work together, municipality to municipality, and to support each other and to share some of the costs wherever they can, and to share the ability to seek help from the next level of government, which is the provincial government, or to seek help from the Minister of Municipal Affairs or wherever it's appropriate. And it's nice to see the North developing in ways that really can stand the test of time and will look after the people of the North.

So *The Northern Municipalities Act* is a very, very important piece of business, and it's important that we do the appropriate consultation. At every opportunity we should ask the people involved what is it that we can do to help you look after yourself, help you do your job better, help you run your municipal organization better? How is it that we can be of assistance? Not how can we put roadblocks up in the way; how can we be a millstone to you. We should be always looking for ways to add value.

You know, I talked about dogs at large. I've talked about the need for support. I've talked about roads. I've talked a little bit about mines. But job opportunities in the North are very important and municipal government is one of the employers in northern Saskatchewan. Municipal government looks after their area of streets and roads. Municipal government will look after the drainage and, you know, many of the garbage issues, that sort of thing, stray dogs or dogs at large in the community. And to look after all of that requires some help. So there is some employment opportunity, clearly.

But one of the challenges that's facing the North is a challenge of incredibly high unemployment which really leads inescapably, when you have chronic and incredibly high level of unemployment, it leads inescapably to feelings of despair and hopelessness, into feelings that there's not much point in trying to improve your lot in life. And it is unfortunate that we get that. In many ways I have to question if that wasn't part of one of the absolute biggest challenge I've heard the member for Athabasca speak. I know he cares deeply about this, as does the member for Cumberland and all of us, of course. But these two live it. These two actually have to deal with their communities where there is a youth suicide rate that is many times the youth suicide rate of southern Saskatchewan.

And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there's nothing worse for any parent than a youth suicide, a son or daughter or a young person committing suicide. I can think of nothing, nothing that would knock your life away, would just make things incredibly desperate. The effect of that on a community is unbelievably difficult, never mind on the family. And we have northern municipalities, northern leaders that are

acknowledging in whatever way they can that they have a problem and they're seeking solutions. They're seeking ways to deal with the issue, seeking ways to address the issue, and they'd be the first to say that they have not found success. They've not met with success in any demonstrable and measurable way. It is my fervent hope that they're making some inroads, that they are in fact saving some young people's lives, they are providing some hope in an otherwise desperate situation. And it's an area frankly, Mr. Speaker, we all have an obligation to do whatever we can to help support not only the young people, but the municipal leaders in northern Saskatchewan and indeed throughout all of Saskatchewan when it comes to such an issue as that.

In terms of health care, I know that when you are in the North, health care has a completely different feel to it than it has in the South. I know that, Mr. Speaker, if I were to experience an accident or somehow wind up with a gash or a cut and was losing blood or something like that, here I would simply show up, I would simply show up at the hospital or a medical clinic. In any event, in Regina I know that I absolutely guarantee that in the worst road construction possible, I'm 15 minutes from care. That's sort of at the worst. I'm 15 minutes from care. I know that I can expect, if the need arose, I could expect an ambulance at my place and I would expect it to be there in under 10 minutes. I would be astounded if it took longer than that. And quite frankly, I would expect it there in about half that time in a normal given day.

I remember my parents went on a fly-in fishing trip and wound up, and my mother wound up with a fish hook through her thumb. And the hard reality was they were seven hours from the nearest health care. Seven hours from the nearest health care. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to relate how they dealt with it, other than to say they didn't wind up going to a health care system. My mother was able to take care of the situation in a way that I don't think I would have had the bravery to do, and her finger was just fine at the end of the day. And there was a little trail of red in the water after she was done doctoring herself.

But seven hours, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to what I related: 15 minutes is what my expectation would be for me to present myself or be presented to the nearest health facility that was appropriate for whatever my needs were. And you know, I say seven hours — that was the situation with my parents in the fly-in fishing — but I know that for many people it's that and more. For some, they're closer. But the North is just huge in terms of geography.

The opportunity for injury of course is equally huge, you know. You rattle along over roads and highways that really make our highways in the South look very, very good for the most part. But you rattle over them and you get a flat tire, and the next thing you know you're in some difficulty. Or you're out collecting firewood and things happen.

I mean this is the reality of the North. It's full of great people, wonderful people that get up in the morning and they know that who they have to rely on is themselves, not some government in Regina or Ottawa or anywhere else. They know that to the extent they have any support from a government of a meaningful way today, you know, in their daily lives, it would

be largely from the municipal government. That's where the action is, and that's where the support is so desperately needed.

Mr. Speaker, you look at educational opportunities. And in the North, in the North if you want to do post-secondary education beyond some community classes, you've got to go out. You've got to be, at minimum, Prince Albert, maybe Saskatoon. Some come to Regina, and I'm sure that some wind up out of province, depending on what the course is that they're taking.

That's not to say that, you know, every course has to be provided in every community. That's not the argument I'm making at all. I am making the argument that for northerners, the obstacles that we overcome in the South, that are merely obstacles in the South are just gargantuan for many people in the North. It can be as simple as financial; it can be much more complex than that. And I know that for many young adults or younger people, you go through the education system in the North, you graduate grade 12, and then you move away from everything you know. It's just a completely different situation. All of the supports, the community, the family, the friends, those supports are gone. If you're lucky, you'll have a few friends at your place of education.

But it's unique. The North is unique. I don't know how better to paint that picture, Mr. Speaker. It's such a vast and beautiful part of Saskatchewan, and we're so blessed and so lucky to have the whole northern half of our province. We're very lucky to have the southern half of our province too, but the vastness and the beauty . . .

I don't know if you've had, how many members have had the opportunity to be in the North, but I recall flying in to do a tour of a couple of uranium mines. And we were flying, and the aurora borealis, the northern lights was actually south of us. We were so far north, the northern lights were south of us. And I don't think I'll ever forget that experience because I just never thought I would . . . I didn't know it was possible until I saw it. I didn't know it was even possible. And the beauty of all of that was just phenomenal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that municipalities need to be dealt with seriously. The northern municipalities have a huge need for consultation. I know that, I know from experience, the experience of my seatmate, the member for Regina Northeast, that you can go into the North; you can consult in a very meaningful way. You can hold public meetings, and you can meet with individuals privately if they . . . if that's the best you can, that's possible. But always in a way that accommodates the northerners.

And if you listen respectfully, if you try and understand their issues, then you can come back to Regina with recommendations, as my seatmate did around the northern overtime exemption Act. And I know that my seatmate came back, and the government here had a fixed notion on one part of the changes that were going to be proposed. And I know that my colleague had been in the North and had consulted and had asked the questions and had listened respectfully and was determined to deliver what the northerners had asked for. He came back and insisted on one specific part of that proposal to be changed and, Mr. Speaker, it was changed. I can tell you that's meaningful consultation. That improved the situation of

northerners.

[19:45]

And I know that my colleague was listening to working people, and I know he was listening to businesses in the North because you've got to have both. You can't run a business without people to work in it, and businesses won't simply be there unless everything is good for them to make money, good for them to operate there, and they can accomplish and fulfill their needs. You have to have a profit. You have to have workers. And without both, you're not going to be in business for terribly long.

But I was very proud of my now seatmate. He wasn't my seatmate then, but I was very proud of the consultation job that he did, and I was very proud of the way he stood up for the northerners around that. So I suspect that he would, if asked by the government, by the Sask Party government, I suspect that my seatmate might even provide some tips as to how that consultation could take place, Mr. Speaker.

The northern municipal Act is very important, and it's very important for a whole host of reasons. We really need to be active in consultation. We really need to deal with the multitude, the myriad of issues that are affecting the North. We need first and foremost via this Act to make sure that the New North and all municipalities in the North are supported to the very, very best of the government in Regina's ability, of the civil servants, at least those that might be left after tomorrow's budget. We need . . .

An Hon. Member: — A handful.

Mr. Trew: — I hope it's more than a handful. My seatmate says the handful that are left. I think it'll be better than that, but let's leave that debate for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. It'll become apparent soon enough.

But we need to be focused on doing the very best we can for all municipalities, all municipal levels of government, whether it's the rural arm through SARM and the municipalities that operate under that umbrella or whether it's through SUMA and the urban municipalities that operate under the SUMA umbrella, so to speak, or the New North.

And in many ways, maybe the New North umbrella needs even more attention than the two levels or the two municipal organizations that have a long and storied history, long and storied history in Saskatchewan. Where the New North is still in, I don't want to say embryonic necessarily, but it's much newer organization, and it still has lots of opportunity, as do the other. But it has lots of opportunity to discover itself and discover ways of working with its membership — that is, the other northern municipalities — to work with its membership so that the delivery of services can just be hugely, hugely improved.

Mr. Speaker, the North needs a good municipal Act. The North needs to have the tools. The North needs the administrative support, clearly, to help its municipalities, clearly needs municipal support, administrative support. And that can come in no small measure from the ministry based in Regina and

providing its services out from here. But we should always be in a supportive role, not in the role of dictating this is the way it is. We should always be respectful and listen and ask and try to work with those northern municipalities.

And in addition to the administrative support, quite clearly need for dollars is there. I know this Bill isn't about dollars directly, so I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on that other than to acknowledge that the northern municipalities absolutely need, they need the administrative support and they need the dollars.

They need this to deal with, Mr. Speaker, issues like roads and the maintenance, the roads, these very roads that in the North are a lifeline. These very roads that . . . Mr. Speaker, in the North usually there's one road. And it's the road that's in and it's the road that's out. You take that one road or you fly. I think that's kind of, pretty much it for the most part. There is some more limited water travel. And I suppose, depending on the time of season, there is some limits in terms of snowmobile. But for the most part realistically it would be like most southern communities. You know, we use our roads. And in the North for the most part, one road — that road that goes in and that road that comes out. So the municipalities need to have our support at every turn.

We have issues like health and education that require a strong municipal organization to make sure that those services are delivered in ways that are beneficial to northern Saskatchewan.

In the North they have issues around dogs, particularly pack dogs, particularly . . . Some people — I think it's a euphemism — but call them, euphemistically, community dogs. Now I've never lived in the North, so I'm not being too critical when I say this. But these are dogs that are for the most part nobody's dog and everybody's dog and pretty tough to take care of them. So the municipalities in the North need to have the support as they try and deal with some of their absolutely unique, unique to the North problems.

The North has vast amounts of area, vast lakes. I think we've got over 10,000 lakes, most of them in northern Saskatchewan. We've got lots of forest, much of that in northern Saskatchewan. We've got all kinds of beauty. We've got beautiful waterfalls in the North, some of which I haven't seen. And by gosh I'm going to, one of these years now and in the not too distant future. I really, really want to spend some more time, more quality time in the North.

I know that there's the Athabasca Sand Dunes in the very northwest corner of our province. I'm much more familiar with the Sceptre sand dunes, just south of Sceptre, in the . . . We call them the great sand dunes, and that's what the atlas calls them. I'm familiar with that because it's where my grandmother's ashes are scattered, along with my grandfather's, having passed away at different times. But the great sand dunes south of Sceptre have a special part in my family's heart. And I always look forward to an opportunity to go there and be part of nature and to remember a great past and to look forward to an even greater future. And it's just an uplifting part of the province that stirs great memories and great hopes, and that's just part of the history of this great province. But I have to get up to the North to see those Athabasca Sand Dunes too, and see how they

compare with the great sand dunes in the South.

For any of that to happen, we need to have strong municipal leadership. In the North we need to have a strong northern municipalities Act. We need to have a municipalities Act that works for northern Saskatchewan, that works for the elected officials and for the administrators of the communities and towns and cities in the North.

We need, very simply put, Mr. Speaker, we need to provide the North with the tools to deal with some of their unique situation. I know I've mentioned the situation of high and chronic unemployment. We need to help the municipalities find ways of dealing with that. I know that the northern municipalities are unable to simply hire everybody, but we need to ensure that we help them deal with high unemployment. We have to deal with health care and make sure that we provide adequate health care.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we haven't even talked about access to potable water, which most of us in the South just think, well in the North that's a given, everywhere there's potable water. But that's just not entirely the harsh reality. That's not always the way it is. So we need to make sure that we help the municipalities in the North deal with very simple — I shouldn't say simple — but the simple concept of safe potable drinking water, the simple concept of good sanitation, the simple concept of being able to look after your household, your family, in a way that we take largely for granted in the South.

So the northern municipalities really do need in some ways, need extraordinary support and in some ways extraordinary help. And that's part of what this Act is about, Mr. Speaker, is enabling us to reach out, enabling us to listen, enabling us to consult, and enabling us to do whatever we can to deal with the myriad issues in the North.

The most serious issue that municipal leaders deal with on a far too often, far too regular way is that of suicide, and particularly youth suicide. And we need to work hand in hand and as diligently as we possibly can with administrators, with elected officials, with the New North that is the umbrella organization for the northern municipalities. Mr. Speaker, there is so much that we can do. I know that I've mentioned earlier that my two colleagues from the North are very passionate about their constituencies, and that's very good. And I understand why they are.

Mr. Speaker, I'm about to end my remarks on this northern municipalities amendment Act. The legislation we have here is actually amending three Acts which is *The Interpretation Act* that replaces references to the former northern municipalities Act with *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*.

It's important that we do the consultation around this. It's important that we get it right. It's important that before we even contemplate passing legislation that we hear as far and wide as we can, we provide the opportunity for northerners to speak up about what really is, in essence, their Act. It really is.

We have a role to play here in Regina around the northern municipalities amendments Act, but really the northerners are the ones that should properly have the most say in it, and they should have the opportunity to make suggestions for additions

or deletions from a Bill. They should be the ones that can best identify whatever potential problems there are. And our job really is to listen as respectfully and carefully as we can, deal with that advice that we get from our northern neighbours and our friends in the North, and then proceed as best we can.

[20:00]

So, Mr. Speaker, recognizing the need for consultation and the desire that we get this Bill right, I move adjournment of *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act*.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Coronation Park has moved adjournment of Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 108

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 108** — *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's truly a pleasure and as always an honour to have the privilege of being able to rise in this House and take part in a debate on a Bill, on this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 108, *An Act to amend The Cities Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Land Surveys Act, 2000*.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've said this before, but I do know it bears repeating, and I think all members would agree with me, that when we do get the opportunity to rise in this House and to take part in the democratic process through a debating of pros and cons on particular pieces of legislation, we do so, I think, with the thought and the memory that we are very honoured to have that privilege. It's a privilege that throughout history has been awarded to very few people. If you look at the number of years that we've been government here, had a legislative government process here in Saskatchewan and then had the elected process, the democratic process of governing this great province of ours, and to have the privilege of being a small part of that is truly an honour, I think, for each and every one of us.

This particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, is in regards to certain changes to the Act, primarily to address areas that weren't addressed in the previous Bill, and perhaps one could say was sort of loopholes in the previous Bill. And this goes in some small direction to fill some of these loopholes.

And it's, for the most part, one would take a look at the initial part of the Bill and would say, well it's kind of reasonable. This one small part here that suggests that the province should play perhaps a lesser role in the closing of streets or closing of roads within the city limits. That those are the decisions that should be

and could be made by the city and probably made on a more informed basis than that would be left up to provincial authority to make those decisions.

Basically I think the process in the past has been that it was the local municipality, the local governance that would recognize the need for a closure of a public road allowance or a public street and would have to justify it to the Department of Highways, would make the recommendations and requests to the Department of Highways for the closure. They'd have to justify the need for that closure and how it would in turn benefit, be beneficial to the residents of the city. And then they'd be able to go ahead and get the approval from the Department of Highways to go ahead and close the particular street. That would then be the process.

And that was a lengthy process, and really it was a process that could be shortened through this Bill. I believe this Bill will go a long way in shortening that and allowing greater influence by the elected governance of the city to make that decision, to be able to recognize the need to close a certain street for perhaps expansion of an industry, or perhaps the expansion of an operation that's very important to the city.

One that comes to mind is the operation in Wynyard, for example, the plant in Wynyard there which is located right in the town limits. And I know that the plant has taken on one or two expansions and it's maximized the area that was available to it. And I think in some ways it's had, to facilitate the final expansion, it had to actually encroach upon the right-of-way or the road allowance or the street within the community of Wynyard. And the necessary process of the town fathers or the officials of the town having to go through that process of establishing the ability to narrow that street so that they would be able to provide a strip of land to facilitate the expansion of the plant, a plant which of course was very important to the economy of the community of Wynyard, very important to the economy of the area around there, and quite frankly very important to the industry itself, the poultry industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, one could quite easily see why it would be much more convenient in cases like that if the local governance had the ability to make those decisions on their own without having to make application to the province and then justify their application to the province before they would be able to receive approval. And it would also shorten the process. As I understand, the present process is quite lengthy and can be quite consuming in time. And this would certainly speed up the process. I think probably it would be a bit of a friendlier opportunity for business in those communities who require that service.

So, Mr. Speaker, of course in principle we would probably support that type of initiative. We would like to know though if this government has done its consultation with the SARM and SUMA who are the municipal leaders of this great province of ours. And they represent, not hundreds, but thousands of people.

And it would be interesting to know what degree the consultation took place. How in-depth was that consultation? What was some of the concerns raised by the officials from SUMA and some of the officials from SARM? And what were

the, you know, the arguments? What were the suggestions? What were the suggestions being raised? And how were they addressed and were they satisfied? Were they, I mean, the officials from the city organization, SUMA, after the consultation process had taken place, were they satisfied that this Bill answers their needs? Does it go far enough? Or perhaps does it go too far? Those are the questions that immediately come to mind.

And one would like to know, I suppose, what those consultations consisted of. And since the government hasn't been clear or at least forthcoming with that type of information, I suppose it's up to the opposition now to have the time available to ourselves to be able to speak to those representatives from the organizations of SUMA and SARM to ensure that they are satisfied, satisfied with the changes that's being proposed in this particular Act.

Mr. Speaker, also I note in glancing through this Act this evening that the legislation also gives municipalities the power to seize mobile homes in the case where property taxes have gone unpaid. And there is a concern that the mobile home could be moved. I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the uniqueness of this situation and of this Act is that a mobile home has — unlike the normal residency of a home that's on a foundation or a footing at least — that the ability to move that home is much easier. And I would think that would be a concern with some of the communities and community leaders that that could be something that could possibly happen. I would think and I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that that one's actually probably very rare, but I suppose that would be a concern.

And at the same time, the officials within the communities who are responsible do need to have the ability to be able to ensure that they have some ability to collect the unpaid taxes if that becomes a huge, huge problem. I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that we would not find those situations very often in this province, although I suppose if you're seeing what's happening throughout Saskatchewan in the last, well basically since the Sask Party has taken over government here, we're seeing situations where the increased cost of living is jumping fairly dramatically.

At one time in this province we used to have a guaranteed lowest utility bundle that was guaranteed by the government. And on those cases when that bundle perhaps was not the lowest, there was compensation made by the government to ensure that it was the lowest. But it was a guarantee to the people of Saskatchewan that they would enjoy the lowest utility bundle, and that guarantee has now of course gone out the window. And in return for that, what we're seeing is higher power rates, power bills to everybody across this province. Whether they be in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan, their power bills are going up. Their power bills are going up quite dramatically. And we understand that we can expect to see that continue for the foreseeable future.

There are some people are suggesting that we will see an increase of as much as 20 per cent over the next year, year and a half. And that, Mr. Speaker, would be quite dramatic, particularly to those people who find themselves, you know, what I would call the working poor of our society, the people who have jobs but they're working at low-end jobs, low-paying

jobs. And these are the people who often will find shelter within the mobile home community and because that's something that up until now at least has been affordable to them. And these are the ones that would be under pressure to ensure that they have enough income to be able to meet their daily needs, pay their power bill, pay their heat bill, be able to provide food for their family.

And that then, Mr. Speaker, would, I suppose, raise an opportunity for taxes on mobile homes to go unpaid. And that then in turn would cause the city fathers or those governing the communities a need to have the ability to ensure that in the event, which I hope would be rare, but in the event that property taxes goes unpaid to the point where action has to be taken, that the local governing body would have the ability to retain the asset on that property, and that asset of course being the mobile home.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that, you know, there's something to be said for this. But at the same time the government should be looking at ways and means to ensure that we have a society and we have an economy that makes provisions and opportunity for all people within our society and within our economy to be able to enjoy a reasonable and quality standard of living, a quality of life so that we don't find ourselves in circumstances where a family has to make a decision between paying their taxes or paying their power bill, where they have to make a decision between paying their property taxes or buying groceries.

Those I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that that would be the goal of any government, is to create a society where those decisions do not have to be made by the working people of our great province of ours. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I don't see that as being the initial intentions of this government over here. Certainly I don't see any of that evidence anywhere.

Quite frankly I am fearful for tomorrow and fearful for the people of this great province of ours and the increased burden that may be thrust upon them as a result of tomorrow's budget. And normally, Mr. Speaker, in a process like this it's the working poor, the poorer people of our society who carry the heaviest load. It is for them I have the greatest concern because I think tomorrow's budget is not going to be a budget of a province that once enjoyed great prosperity, enjoyed a surplus of over \$2 billion, and now find ourselves, after just two short years, in a situation where we're looking at a deficit, though the government will suggest that they're balancing their books. But they're balancing their books on the backs of the working poor. They're balancing their books on their ability to draw down on the savings account. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that's as far as they go. I hope that they don't mortgage the assets of our province in order to maintain their balanced books.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we start to look at this particular Bill, Bill 108, and on the face of it, it would seem like some of the changes that are being suggested here are reasonable changes. But of course we need the time to consider the proposals being put forward and to ensure that they are being done in a fair and equitable way. And I would hope that this piece of legislation doesn't in some way . . . isn't balanced and isn't fair, that it weighs heavier on one part of our society or our group or our taxpayers than it does on another. And I would hope that wouldn't be the case, Mr. Speaker.

But we need to ensure this government's done its consultations. I see no evidence of that. I see no evidence of it in either the second reading speech of the minister. I don't see any references to the consultations that they may or may not have carried out. I don't see any particular references within the notes that were given to us to help explain some of the changes that they're proposing in this particular Bill. I don't see any reference to the consultations that may have resulted by government officials with these officials with SARM or SUMA that would have reflected in the changes in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker.

[20:15]

So that's always a concern of mine. It's always a concern of mine when I'm not satisfied, I don't feel comfortable that consultations had taken place. Or if the consultations did take place, were they earnest consultations or were they only consultations in name? That's always the question, Mr. Speaker, and it's easy to say, well yes, we consulted. But who did you consult with? Who did you consult with? What was the subject of the consultations? What was the subject of the discussions? And what was the reaction of those people who are going to be affected?

It's the officials, it's officials within the communities, Mr. Speaker, who are given the responsibility to ensure that they look after the affairs of those communities. And they need to have the ability to do that, the tools to do that. And that's the role of the government is to provide the tools to our locally elected officials and appointed officials to ensure that they have the tools to be able to carry out their jobs, to be able to do their duties.

And they do a wonderful job, Mr. Speaker. And I must admit that I am perhaps a bit biased when I say that because I had the opportunity of spending 10 years on municipal council in the RM [rural municipality] of Clayton. And it was an experience that I thoroughly enjoyed because it was a learning experience; it taught me the value of local government. There's something, there's something that you learn from first-hand experience in governing an area like that, a smaller area like that where basically you're working closely with your friends and your neighbours.

And at the end of the day, I think everybody wanted something, you know, to improve their particular situation, whether it be a road to their farm land or whether it be simply a culvert put in to help with spring drainage. But at the end of the day, you would as a councillor, you would do the best you could to satisfy the needs. You would prioritize, you'd learn to prioritize the issues. And to those who perhaps didn't meet that list on the first year, you'd be able to sit down and talk to them, explain to them why it was that you couldn't perhaps do the work that they needed as urgently as they would like to have seen it done.

And it was a learning process, but it was also a good process because it taught you a lot of lessons that serve you well throughout life; not only in the life of politics but just in your own business world or in your own life, period. It teaches you a lot of things about people, about how . . . the wants and the needs and how sometimes we all, you get those two confused. Sometimes we get our wants confused with our needs. And

when you sort that out, sometimes the picture looks a lot different.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is one of the things that comes about through the consultation process, is that you would be able to, if that consultation was done by this government and was done in a meaningful way, then likely they would have been able to identify that there are wants and needs by the municipalities — the wants that municipalities want, the things that they want done. But there are things that they need done. And those are two different, two different points, Mr. Speaker.

And it's very important that the municipalities have the ability, have the ability to be able to address their needs. And often that is the role for the provincial government to provide those tools — not just the funding, not just the programming and just the funding — but the legislative tools to be able to allow the communities to be able to address their own needs. Because quite frankly, they're the ones that know the answers. They're the ones that have the problem, who are the front-line people, and it's been my theory throughout life that if you need a solution, you go to the person with the problem. The front-line people who have the problem are the ones who know the solution and know the answer to that problem and they'll know how to fix it.

And that's why I've often wondered, Mr. Speaker, having spent a number of years both on that side of the House as well as on this side of the House, why that we don't look at starting a whole wide-ranging consultation with the municipalities to identify ways and means that we can modernize our approach to the funding of municipalities. I know that in the past, municipalities will come to the provincial government, often with their cap in their hand, saying, you know, we need increased funding. We need more grants. We need more money. We need more revenue sharing. We need more of this; we need more of that.

And they do. Don't get me wrong. They do. I mean they do a wonderful job of maintaining the services that we enjoy throughout our great province of ours.

But in some cases — and I will use the city of Regina for an example — the city of Regina is an older governing body than the province of Saskatchewan and yet we have a parent-adolescent arrangement with the municipalities and it seems to be ongoing. And I wonder why we wouldn't take the initiative in co-operation with the leaders of our communities and our cities to look at ways and means that we can modernize the regulations, the legislation, to give this greater powers to the cities, greater powers for the cities to be able to generate their own revenue, to be able to generate their own revenue to meet their needs so that they can make their own decisions, so that they make the plans what it is they want to do, and be able to generate the money for that.

I wonder we don't move down that road with, I think, a little better pace than we have so far because I think it would only be fair. You have a very senior governing body in our cities. They're duly elected. They are a governing body that makes the decision on behalf of a large, massive group of people. And why we shouldn't we be working with them to identify ways and means that we could increase their powers, increase their

ability to generate revenue to meet their own needs, that they could basically have it all? They could make the decisions as to what it is that they want to achieve; then generate the revenue to achieve it.

I often wondered, Mr. Speaker, why we don't — when I say we, I mean we collectively here — don't move in that direction, and why the government wouldn't take the lead to establish that type of a consultation process. And I think it could be done through SUMA. I would think SUMA would be receptive to that and I think that it would be . . . It would just simply something I think it's time should happen.

Because I don't believe we need to continue for generations to come to have this parent-adolescent relationship where every year the city goes to make its budget but it can't really determine what its budget's going to be until it knows the funding level it's going to receive from its parent, the provincial government or its federal government, or a combination of both. And yet we do so with a governing body that has got as much history in this province as the Government of Saskatchewan.

So I think that we . . . I mean these are duly elected people. They are senior government. They have the ability to make the decisions on behalf of the people that they represent. Why shouldn't they be given the powers to be able to generate the revenue, to be able to support those decisions? And I would, if I had the ability into the future, Mr. Speaker, in my role as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], that would be something that I would like to work towards achieving because I think it's something that its time's at hand.

And I believe that this is, you know, if you look at some of the changes that are suggested in Bill 108, those changes could go even further, could go even further, could go even further and give greater revenue-generating powers to our urban municipalities and allow them the ability to be able to set their own agenda, I guess you would say, and be masters of their own destiny. They'd be able to decide what projects they want to go after — what projects they would believe would benefit their community — and then put forward a plan of generating the revenue to support those projects.

And I, as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, covers everything, whether it be redoing our streets, whether it be sewer and water, whether it be putting in traffic lights. Those things should be . . . Those are the decisions that have been made by the city, because quite frankly they're the people at the front lines. They're the people that are facing those problems. They know what those issues are. They know what those problems are. They should also have the ability to generate the revenue to be able to address those problems. They should have the ability to generate the revenue to be able to build their cities in the way that they have a plan for that growth. And they should have that ability to generate revenue, not just based on a year-to-year basis, but have the ability to know that they have a certain level of revenue into the future so they can make long-term plans. I think it would benefit everybody, Mr. Speaker.

But I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that's my own personal opinion on something that I do feel fairly strongly about. I think that the municipalities, particularly urban municipalities, should be worked with very co-operatively, and a long and in-depth and

serious consultation process take place to identify ways and means that changes could be made to allow the cities to expand their powers, to be able to allow the cities to expand their powers of generating revenue so that they can service their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I think it we also in this province have been experiencing now for some time growth, particularly growth in our urban centres. We are seeing certainly the principal cities of Regina and Saskatoon grow and grow quite rapidly. But we are also seeing the other cities growing. Most recently there was a news story on, on both television and in the print media on the issues facing the city of Yorkton, for example, who are looking at the growth of their city, looking at the need to be able to develop new subdivisions and develop new areas for businesses.

And they simply of course didn't have the land within the city limits so they had to expand their city limits. And in the cases, in the past at least, these kind of cases have always been irritants with the municipalities because there's always been that, I suppose, rubbing each other wrong in the process. And I think Yorkton was one of those examples, where it was tough, tough negotiations. And I don't think hard feelings as a result of it, but certainly tough negotiations between the RMs and the city. But eventually, I understand, a deal has been made to facilitate the ability for the city to expand, and into the municipalities, and basically the annexing of municipal property into the city so that the city can start to service those lots, provide the opportunity for expansion, both in the residential aspect but also within the commercial aspect.

But those are some of the things that, Mr. Speaker, that I do believe that there's opportunity here and should be. And this Bill could be probably one of those vehicles of opportunity that would allow for the negotiations and the consultations between the government and both the RM and SUMA . . . I should say SARM and SUMA to be able to facilitate a process where, in the future, there wouldn't have to be a tough negotiations, and there wouldn't have to be a rub against each other. There wouldn't have to be hard feelings, hopefully, left as a result of it.

But there should be a mechanism put into place that fair and reasonable consultations and discussions and negotiations would take place to ensure that the municipalities, in the case of a city's expansion, that case the municipalities received fair and reasonable compensation. But at the same time the ability for the city to be able to expand and the knowledge that the community fathers of the city would have that they would be able to expand. When the time came, they'd be able to expand. They'd be able to meet the ability to plan into the future.

I think you would agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that most of these communities would have a long-term planning in place, and they need to know that when the time comes that they'll be able to expand, to be able to accommodate an expansion of the residential sections, urban expansion of the commercial sections of their community. It's very important in order to make plans for the future, but it's also very important to be able to attract business and attract investment to their communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that's just once more the real

opportunity this government has. It has a real opportunity to start that process, that process of consultation to ensure that they are able to meet the needs, the growing needs and the changing needs of the cities and towns across this great province of ours. And here's a chance to do that in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, since the government has proposed to open this Bill up, that we would be able to make those changes so that it would meet the needs, not only today but into the future. And the opportunity is at hand, Mr. Speaker, because, since we're going to be opening up this Bill and making amendments to the Act, that we could do so in a way that would be of long-term benefit to the communities. And we wouldn't be back here in a year or two at the will of the communities saying, you know, this doesn't work; we need to have other changes.

[20:30]

With proper consultation . . . And had this government and its officials carried out proper consultation with the city governments and communities across this great province of ours, I think that this would be a great opportunity to be able to get it right, get it right this time so that we don't . . . back here in a year or two doing, basically doing the same thing — reopening the Act so that we can make certain amendments because it hasn't met the needs for our communities.

And I use Yorkton as an example because I think that's the one that I'm aware of simply from watching it on the news. I don't know any of the details of the situation there, but I watched on the news, and I do know that Yorkton is a growing community. And I would think that perhaps some of the experiences from Yorkton's situation, had the consultation, had the officials, had this government done some consultations with the city of Yorkton — and perhaps the member has; I don't know — but it would have been beneficial to have been able to incorporate those ideas and those experiences and their suggestions into the Act here now since we have the Act open.

And I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Yorkton has had the opportunity to have those discussions. I know that the member from Yorkton is a very conscientious member and does a very good job out there of staying in touch with his constituents and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well that's what I hear from people in Yorkton area who tell me that they see him around every once in a while. They're a little disappointed in the fact that although all they do is see him, they don't see any real results. But they do know that he is restricted by the party in which he is a member of.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that's just one example of the opportunity that's at hand here, and that this government could have, could have taken advantage of that opportunity to make those changes — since the Act is open anyway — to make those changes that would facilitate the ability for communities into the future to expand and expand with ease and without any hard feelings, without any disagreements, I guess you would say; that a process would be put into place, a fair and reasonable process so that at the end of the day the municipalities, the rural municipalities would get a fair and reasonable compensation for the annexing of any property that they may lose.

But at the same time, the city would have the ability to grow and to know it could do this, could know it could grow so that

we'd be able to attract businesses to make that investment because many of those investments are on a long-term basis. And they need to know before they make that final decision that they will have the ability to proceed with their construction plans in an orderly fashion and a timely fashion so that they don't find themselves being held up with red tape because the city hasn't been able to move quick enough, and that the increased . . . That holdup simply increases the cost of the construction cost of their facility, costs of their project.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that the government had a golden opportunity here. Since they're opening up this Act anyway, making the amendments to this Act, they could have carried out the proper consultations with the cities to ensure that those suggestions, the experiences of the cities' leadership and the suggestions, would have been able to have been incorporated in this Act and would've been able to get it right the first time.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that I see a bit of disappointment starting to creep up on the horizon here because I don't sense that that consultation has taken place. And I certainly don't sense that the proposed amendments here certainly would address any of those most recent issues that I've raised.

And, Mr. Speaker, a number of the cities and their neighbouring RMs have found the process of altering municipal boundaries and annexing of land and the determination of compensation to be unnecessarily cumbersome. And that's what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker. Here was the opportunity. The government was opening up this Act, was opening up this Act through the suggested amendments here. It would have been the opportunity to have taken a little more time, carried out meaningful discussions, meaningful consultations with the leadership of the urban municipalities to be able to identify what other changes could have been made to this Act, at the same time these amendments were taking place, to ensure that it reflects, really reflects the needs of the municipalities out there. And so far, Mr. Speaker, we don't see that.

It's not clear whether or not the government's process with these changes to these provisions are an adequate solution to the problem. It's simply not clear. We have no evidence of that. And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have no evidence of that either in the second reading speech by the minister and/or in the explanatory notes they've given us to accompany the Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again it's up to the opposition to contact those people and those organizations, particularly the municipalities who are being affected by this, to identify the shortcomings of the amendments to this Act and perhaps will be able to then make the recommendations to government that they may want to perhaps withdraw this Bill and go back and rework it and do it again, and this time get it right. This time get it at a level where it meets the needs as put forward by the local RMs and by the local city governments.

Mr. Speaker, also I find it interesting that this piece of legislation also gives the municipalities the authority to request criminal record checks for candidates seeking public office. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that it would be suggested that the municipalities would have those, that authority. And yet that same authority is not being provided — at least not that I've seen anywhere in any of the Acts — not being provided to the

province. And my question is, why would it not be something that, if the government is moving in that direction, then why wouldn't it be something that would be fair and equitable if it was applied to all levels of government within the province, whether provincial government, city government, and rural government? I think it's something that is . . . I'm not saying it's wrong, Mr. Speaker. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying it's wrong. What I'm saying is that I think the government's kind of missed the boat here a little bit by not applying it equally to all levels of government in this province.

And I would think that if you're going to make that dramatic a change, we need to do so again after fair and reasonable consultation because I think there has to be some guidelines. That's a very broad statement. What constitutes a criminal record? A speeding ticket? Is that enough to be a criminal record? I don't know. It doesn't state here what level of consultation has taken place. It doesn't state at all what level of record check would be considered a criminal record. Those are the things, Mr. Speaker, that would certainly need to be answered before, I think, this Bill would be considered a serious, a serious Bill.

Again I just don't understand why it wouldn't be applied equally to all levels of government whether . . . not just to the municipal government or anybody seeking municipal office but why it wouldn't also be applicable to somebody seeking provincial office. And I think it's again an opportunity that the government has missed. It was an opportunity, the opening this Act. They want to make amendments to this Act, but yet they haven't obviously carried out extended consultations to this recommendation or this amendment because it falls short by only being applicable to municipal office. And really one would say it's a double standard, has one standard for those seeking municipal office and another standard for those seeking provincial office.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that falls once again short on this government and indicates their lack of consultation, and their lack of having done that consultation in a way that was serious and meaningful. And quite frankly I'm beginning to wonder if they really did any consultation, Mr. Speaker.

And again it begs the question of who approached the government to make these amendments and why? Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the role of government is to be able to identify the changes needed in the municipal Act to facilitate and assist the municipalities to carry out their duties, their duties as I say. And it's a very important duty. I had the opportunity, like I said earlier, to be on municipal council for 10 years.

And quite frankly I found that very interesting and very useful. I found it to be a real need for the power of the municipality to be there at hand when required because most cases you were dealing right up front with the issue, whether it be a road issue or whether it be a safety issue on a municipal grid road or whether it be a water and sewer problem with one of our communities that was under the umbrella of the RM because certain communities are, across this great province of ours.

We have within the RM structure we have hamlets. Hamlets usually have their own elected board that govern that particular hamlet and does so in a similar legislative manner as we have

here. And then we have the hamlets that are under the RM responsibility or RM jurisdiction. And they're unorganized hamlets and that they are the responsibility of the local councillor in the area. And they work very closely with the councillor to identify their needs. And the councillor's responsibility is to take that back to the municipal body and to lobby on behalf of that particular unorganized hamlet to provide those facilities.

Some of those facilities include sewer and water system. I know one community in my municipality — it wasn't in my division but was in my municipality — that fell into that category. It wasn't an organized hamlet, but it was a hamlet that had its own governing structure. And they levied a tax on themselves to be able to facilitate the construction of a water system.

I don't believe they had a sewer system, but they simply had a water system that supplied each family, I guess you could say, within that hamlet with the ability to have running water. And it was done collectively and it was a good process because it ensured the quality of water was that that met the requirements of the Department of Health. Because the Department of Health would, on a regular basis, investigate the water and ensure that the quality of water was there, and it was a good system. I think it improved the lot and improved the life of the people who lived in that particular community.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is certainly a meaningful role for government to play in assisting our municipalities to be able to achieve the goals that they set for themselves. I think it's important. I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we allow the municipalities to set those goals, we give the municipalities the privilege and the power to be able to set the goals, to be able to design the community that they want to see and to be able to achieve that. And I think there's a role for government to assist and support those communities to reach those goals.

And I think it's not a system where the province should be dictating to the municipality what it is that they hope to achieve. I think it should be the other way around. I think the municipalities should be able to identify what it is that they want to achieve; they should be able to identify the kind of community they want to develop. And then they should be able to come to the provincial government and say, this is the type of community we want to develop and this is the role that you can play in assisting us.

And it's not just a financial role, Mr. Speaker. It's a role where often a changing in regulations or changing of certain provisions with legislation would go a long way in achieving that. And that's why I say here was an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, when the government decided to open up *The Cities Act* by making certain amendments. And as outlined here in Bill 108, it was an opportunity for them to — for them, the government — to get it right.

In order to do that though, Mr. Speaker, they would have had to go out there and carry out fair and reasonable consultations with those communities that are going to be affected, those municipalities that are going to be affected. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that this government did that. I see no evidence of it. I see no signs of it. I see no suggestion anywhere that fair and reasonable and extensive consultation was carried out with

those communities that would be affected through the amendments in this particular Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that once again this government has let down the people of Saskatchewan by not fulfilling its responsibilities and its duties by ensuring that they were able to talk to those folks out there who are going to be affected by such changes, to ensure that those changes are the correct changes, that those changes will do the job, that those changes are what it is that the people out there in the front lines, the people in our municipalities that are the front-line folks out there that know the issues, know the problems. Why? Because they live it every day. They know the issues. They know the problems. And they also know the solutions to it.

[20:45]

And they would have been able to share with the government, had consultations taken place. They would have been able to share with the government what was their ideas and their suggestions as to what amendments should really take place to be able to reflect the needs that these municipalities recognize are barriers to growth, are barriers to their ability to expand their communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, those are the things that a consultation process would have brought about. And I'm disappointed that the government didn't do that because here was the opportunity. The chance was here. The chance was at hand to be able to do it, to make the recommendations, to make the amendments, and to get it right. And, Mr. Speaker, obviously this government hasn't been able to do that.

And for what reason? I'm left speechless as to identify the reasons why they wouldn't go out and talk to folks that they represent. Why they wouldn't go out and talk to those folks that are the leaders of the communities? And why they wouldn't talk to them and be able to provide the meaningful amendments, meaningful changes to the Act so that it would benefit the communities and the people within?

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more to be said on this particular Bill, and I know that a lot of my colleagues want to get in on the opportunity to discuss this further. Like I said, there's a lot more to be said.

And I'm sure that perhaps even the member from Yorkton might have something he'd like to add to this Bill, whether he'd do it in this legislative process or whether he'll do it in a private discussion with the minister, but I'm sure that he will be contributing in his own way.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would, at this point in time, move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Northeast has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 122

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Heppner that **Bill No. 122 — *The Environmental Assessment Amendment Act, 2009*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join today and add my comments and certainly the position we have in reference to Bill No. 122. And this is *An Act to amend The Environmental Assessment Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Forest Resources Management Act*.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was glued to my seat listening to my colleague here speak about some amendments to the communities. And it was a riveting presentation. And I certainly want to point out that I've been here for close to 15 years now and I've been never been riveted to my seat by such an astounding amount of information coming from such a small Bill. It certainly shows that there is a lot of work, a lot of research ability and intelligence on my colleague's part. And I want to certainly publicly recognize him and commend him for the tremendous amount of good work on that Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to enter the debate, the debate on what's the Bill's intent here. And as I pointed out, the minister had certainly made a motion to move the Act, *The Environmental Assessment Amendment Act, 2009*. And her point was that it has been 30 years since *The Environmental Assessment Act* was first passed and a lot has changed. And certainly with regard to environment, science, and technology, factors such climate change, environmental protection, water conservation, and readiness for economic growth are driving the need to evolve.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the points that she raised as the purpose of this Bill, this particular Bill that I think certainly had some merit, in a sense of trying to recognize the environment and the science and technology attached to that, and certainly talking about environmental protection and climate change.

And I can remember one day my young daughter rushed up to me and says, dad, there's some good news on the newspaper. The minister announced a program, and we had certainly assumed that this Bill was it, that there's going to be some aggressive change to how we battle climate change. Maybe some aggressive action on trying to build our forests and make our forests stronger and more safer in terms some of the degradation that's going to happen, or perhaps there's going to be land set aside to protect cabin areas, or maybe there's going to be some special programs for fishermen or fishers or trappers, that there's just a real amount of opportunity that I thought the Minister of the Environment was going to make a presentation to our newspaper in the area.

And, Mr. Speaker, I was a bit disappointed, to say the least. Because February 9th, 2010, in the *Northern Pride* which is out of Meadow Lake, the program that the minister announced was the provincial toilet replacement rebate program was extended. And so we just kind of fell out of our chairs and we said, wow,

this minister certainly has a lot of visionary thinking when she extends the toilet replacement rebate program. And, Mr. Speaker, we look at some of the actions of this particular minister when it comes to a wide variety of issues. On many, many fronts there has been zero, zero, and zero in terms of effort. And quite frankly, in terms of progress and opportunity she gets, as many people say, a big fat F-minus.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is meant by readiness for economic growth? And I look across the way and I always tell people back home to watch what is being proposed by this particular government because readiness for economic growth is not putting in the proper tax incentives. It is certainly not making the labour that you may need to get the growth opportunities in place. It is not talking about incentives, not talking about attracting new companies. Readiness for economic growth from a right wing government really means get everything off the way, including standards, including environmental protection, and anything that may impede a company from coming out here and doing a bunch of work, even at the expense of the environment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I look at the whole notion attached to Bill 121. And it really talks about what their particular mindset is when it comes to the province of Saskatchewan. We know in northern Saskatchewan, and we certainly know from the circles that I keep in terms of the political circles, which are very good circles, that this government across the way, they have to get rid of a number of things. And that includes the Crowns, the unions, the social causes, the environmental rules and regulations, and big government. And if they get rid of all those particular fronts, Mr. Speaker, then all of a sudden they may have an opportunity to stay in power.

But the problem is they didn't tell all these groups of people. And now tonight I want to expand on that and to tell them that's exactly what their strategy is behind even Bill No. 121, is to get rid of those nasty little things called environmental standards and environmental responsibility. Those are deterrents to industry coming here. That's their thinking, Mr. Speaker. And I needn't remind people that if you look at an area that I always look at as an example of where you don't have proper environmental standards — which this Bill talks about, which this Bill has an effect on — is Fort McMurray. Have a look at that from the satellite and you will see a lot of degradation to the environment. And that's what this Bill is starting to propose. That's what this Bill is starting to propose.

Now I look at some of the opportunities that this minister had over time to do a lot of things on the environmental front, and she hasn't done anything. So today I want to use the Fort McMurray example. I'm going to use the Fort McMurray example of why you need to have good, solid controls, Mr. Speaker, why you have to have a good guideline, where you've got to have a measure of environmental conscience if you want to be government.

If you want to have a process where you're going to allow every company to come along and do what they want without regard for the environment, well what you do? You don't say that in some of your Bills. What you do is you use some of the buzzwords attached to the minister's explanation on this Bill such as readiness for economic growth.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we read that readiness to economic growth for those guys means taking environmental shortcuts at the expense of people and at the expense of course of the environment. Now what you ought to know is that Fort McMurray, Fort McMurray is causing a lot of damage, and not to only the Alberta environment but to Saskatchewan as well. And what happened there? What happened there is the government said, oh we're ready for economic activity. And yes, we want to see the phrase, readiness for economic growth.

So my argument to the people in Saskatchewan is, no matter how benign a Bill may appear, such as Bill 121, there's real motivation behind that government to listen to their political masters in Alberta to take a shortcut when it comes to the protection of our environment and the protection of our people, Mr. Speaker.

Now this whole notion of readiness for economic growth, I look at that and I say to people that I often sit down with, is that who is going to argue against growth? Who is going to argue against growth? Nobody's going to argue against growth. But what people are talking about is sustained, responsible growth. That's what they're talking about. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that's a lot different cry that we hear from the people out in Saskatchewan than we hear from what the Saskatchewan Party government is trying to prepare and plan for when it comes to a Bill of this sort.

So about the only thing that I've seen the minister effectively do was she extended the rebate program for provincial toilet replacement program. And that's exactly, exactly what ought to be. That's exactly where this Bill ought to go — in a provincial toilet — because quite frankly the words on this Bill isn't meant in any way, shape, or form to really achieve the objectives that the minister alludes to achieving, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point out that we talk about, during the Bill presentation, that Saskatchewan proceeds with environmental safeguards in place. That's another buzzword, Mr. Speaker, attached to the Bill — environmental safeguards. So we have this readiness for economic growth language. We have this environmental safeguard language. And people say, what's that all about? What's that all about? Well quite frankly those are buzzwords thrown into these Bills, thrown into these Bills to make sure, to make sure that there are no such things as environmental safeguards from companies that want to come here and do what they want and then head out of Dodge. There is none. And this government's allowing that to continually happen.

And every consequential Act that they bring forward, every kind of language as a readiness for economic opportunity — those aren't really words of encouragement for industry. Those are buzzwords and words meant to say, come on to Saskatchewan; we'll get rid of those simple things like environmental protection. We'll get rid of those words like due process. We'll get rid of those words like responsibility to the environment. All those words will be gone, and we'll put a new word in place of all of them, and that word is readiness for economic growth, Mr. Speaker. That's their agenda. That's their plan.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Because if they get rid of the unions, they

get rid of the Crowns, they get rid of the social causes, they get rid of the environmental agenda, what happens is, bit by bit by bit by bit they weaken Saskatchewan. And then they can leave it wide open and 10 years from now, Mr. Speaker, there isn't going to be nothing such as environmental safeguards and rules and regulations in place to protect our land and our environment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to again point out that there is a notion out there that Fort McMurray, with its booming economy, is creating a huge environmental challenge — not just to Alberta but to many of the neighbouring communities and many of the neighbouring provinces around. And that I'm talking about the territories, Alberta . . . I'm sorry, BC [British Columbia], and Saskatchewan. And some of the effects of acid rain, as an example, even go as far as Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the example of the puppet masters in Alberta and what they're trying to do with this particular government, it's that saying, you get rid of the environmental standards, you get rid of the quality standard control they have there, and use a new word in its place. Because we want to fool the people of Saskatchewan; we want to use the buzz phrases like readiness for economic growth.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this Bill is intended to do. It is intended to take shortcuts. It is intended to circumvent what I think was a good process, to make sure companies were responsible. It is intended to, quite frankly, ignore the reality that many people have been telling this government and telling other governments that there are challenges to the environment, there's some global challenges we all face, and you ought to pay respect to those issues and those concerns that are raised and you ought to listen, Mr. Speaker. You ought to listen.

[21:00]

So when I look at this Bill and I think about some of the challenges attached to it, you want to really read what is being said with some of the phrases presented by that minister and that party — readiness for economic growth. That has nothing to do with economic growth. It has everything to do with environmental shortcuts that we have seen time and time again, our examples that we ought to be worried about and we ought to be warned about. And Fort McMurray is one area that I think we ought to watch and have watch for as an example of how, if industry is left unchecked, if industry is left unchecked, what could be the net result, Mr. Speaker.

Now I travelled to Fort Chip a number of years ago, and I seen some of the activities happening in that community. And I pointed out at the time that what are some of the challenges environmentally to the people in that area. And similar to this Bill, there were shortcuts afforded to the large oil companies that we think, that we think had not only environmental challenges to the Fort Chip and northern Alberta area, but many of the residents there as well felt that there was an increase in the number of cancers in that community and that they strongly believed that, as a result of the lax environmental rules and unfair processes of putting some of these oil companies in business in Alberta, resulted in the fact that there was some serious health problems for the people of Fort Chip as well — serious health problems. And that includes all kinds of cancer, a

dramatic and remarkable increase in cancer.

And this government is saying no, there's no connection to that, that we should have let that occur and happen in Saskatchewan. Leave it unchecked and we'll use the phrase readiness for economic growth to deflect what their real agenda is.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I see some of the backbenchers chirping away there. And what they don't realize, what they don't realize is this Bill has none of their input in it, first of all, and secondly, the agenda's not driven by them nor their constituents. They're but mere passengers on the puppet masters' plan for that government, from Alberta, when it comes to environmental regulations or any Bill that's being brought forward to talk about adjusting or changing or altering *The Environmental Assessment Act*.

Figure it out. Figure it out because obviously you guys don't know what's happening there. And the other point that's really quite concerning is you don't have a clue it's happening, and therefore it's quite frankly a discredit to you and your government when you allow this kind of activity to occur without clearly analyzing it and watching what goes on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that on the Fort McMurray example, on the Fort McMurray example I want any one of those backbenchers there to stand up and say, oh no, they have all the right environmental standards in place. And not one of them will. And the reason why is they know that it's not the case. This is not the case. That that development was allowed to occur unchecked, unfettered, and that's exactly what happens to the environment and to the health of some of the Albertans because quite frankly the government didn't stand up with the proper rules and regulations and processes like this government isn't doing here in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats want to see economic growth for Saskatchewan, but we want it sustainable and we want it responsible. Those are some of the things that I know that people are saying. Well that's a clear difference between that Saskatchewan Party and the New Democratic caucus, Mr. Speaker.

We believe that environmental regulation benefits to the Saskatchewan people — certainly having the process clearly understood by as many people and having that process rigorous to ensure one thing, is that we don't destroy the land for the oil under that land. And this party is doing none of that, Mr. Speaker. And any Bill, any Bill that they bring forward that has any kind of environmental connotation to it, and even the words environment somewhere, I say to them today that it means nothing to them, absolutely nothing to them. And quite frankly I don't believe they understand it nor comprehend what is being done to Saskatchewan and what is being done to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that again as I mentioned, when I look at the attachment to the phrase, readiness for economic growth, I see environmental safeguards. And then it hits me because part of the minister's argument that says we, and I quote, “. . . to voluntarily apply for a minister's screening decision.” Now what does that mean? What does a minister's screening decision mean? The screening decision is, it allows the minister's office to arbitrarily decide which projects need

better screening or which ones don't.

So therefore all the caucus people in the backbenches there don't have a clue which companies are going to come along and do some of these things in our province. They are agreeing to this Bill to allow that particular minister the exclusive right to say, okay, company A, company D, company X, you guys can come do what you want. Company C, company Y, we'll maybe let you guys go through this process. Well quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, some of the processes attached to approving some of these companies' operations in Saskatchewan ought to have public disclosure. It ought to have environmental, an environmental process and it ought to have an assessment in terms of economic opportunity, employment opportunity, training opportunity, and resource revenue-sharing opportunities. Those are some of the things that I think is very, very important, Mr. Speaker.

And when you look at the notion, and I'm really glad that the minister read it out the way she read it out in that particular order because it lends credence to my argument that the phrase, readiness for economic growth, really means that some of these guys can come along and take a shortcut for the environmental rules and regulations that they ought to have in place for every company.

Now the backbench may not like what I'm saying today, Mr. Speaker, but quite frankly they are passengers on that freight train to ruin the environment, take all kinds of shortcuts attached to this Bill No. 122. And quite frankly they don't have a clue which companies are going to be approved and which ones are not going to be approved.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think they should look at the Bill, look at the intent, and maybe one of these days stand up for the constituents and stand up for those people that want to protect the environment. Stand up for those people that want to say, we ought to have a good process here to discover these opportunities and to screen these opportunities instead of blindly saying, yes we'll support Bill 122. Why? Well we're part of the Saskatchewan Party caucus; we have to.

Okay. If you have to, do you understand it? And the answer I get, well no. It's good for the economy. It's readiness for economic growth. Well, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the language and the words that that party uses and those caucus members use it. My only challenge to them today is, shouldn't you at least understand what you're doing? Because once you understand what you're doing and you know what's going on, then you can't say, well I didn't know. I didn't know. I didn't know those words, readiness for economic growth, meant taking environmental shortcuts.

We're telling you loud and clear that's exactly what this Bill is doing. That's exactly what they're doing to make you guys look like you're part of this project and process and therefore quite frankly, in my opinion, contaminating the process of having a free, clean, and very public process to see what some of these projects are all about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I looked at, on the Bill, some of the offence and penalty provisions. Well as much as the minister may want to talk about the \$1,000 per day or \$250,000 per day, like really

how many people are going to be affected by that? I still want to see how many companies that voluntarily want to go to a minister's screening that have less assessment, less scrutiny, but boy, if you don't follow us we're going to give you a \$250,000 per day fine. Well get real here because the obvious answer is that you can throw those penalties up but you have no intent whatsoever of penalizing any of these companies.

That's just a thing to make you feel good and say, yes we can do this. Every oil company or every company that wants to propose something, they don't for one second believe that you guys are going to make them go through an environmental process, and not for a split second think that you guys are going to penalize them \$250,000 a day.

That's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that when people read these Bills, when people read these Bills, you've got to make absolutely sure that the terminology and the wording that they have on some of these Bills that they're proposing really is very clear. And this Bill is not clear, Mr. Speaker, not in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also point out that that when you look at the other words that the minister used, and I want to quote, "The amendments include the ability to establish class assessment processes where projects have common characteristics." That's another part that we kind of sat back and laughed and said, well if she supports one company that hasn't got a very good track record and that has broken every environmental law and has taken every shortcut possible, well if there's five or six other companies like that and they have fit the minister's screening process, well they do have the same characteristics, they do have the same tendencies, so we'll let them take more shortcuts.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's just a number of things that people ought to be worried about when they talk about *The Environmental Assessment Act*. It is something that people out there ought to be very, very careful when they look through some of these Bills and they read what's being said and they start thinking to themselves, is this what they mean? Because what the average citizen means and what they hope happens in any environmental Bill, including Bill No. 122, is radically different than what the Sask Party government proposes on many, many fronts.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the backbench to be very, very careful because whenever a minister proposes changes like this to your Act, research it, learn from it, read from it, and make sure that what she's saying to the public and saying in this Assembly follows through exactly with what you think it is.

And many of you don't have a clue what is being proposed because you don't take the time to read it and therefore you don't understand it. And quite frankly, you ought to because you're going to be tied hook, line, and sinker on many of these fronts because you're part of that government that makes these shortcuts.

So, Mr. Speaker, I go back to my earlier comment when I thought of Bill No. 122. When I thought of Bill 122, I thought this is pretty much on par with the provincial toilet replacement rebate program. It's pretty much even in terms of the same net

benefit, the same net benefit that I think would happen for Saskatchewan if Acts like this are proposed and adopted by the Sask Party government. The provincial toilet replacement rebate program could probably do more environmental good than this entire government's environmental Bills put together, Mr. Speaker. That's how dramatic the intent is in terms of what they write and actually what they preach.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to support the minister on her provincial toilet replacement rebate program. I'm glad she extended it. But there ain't no way that we're going to sit by and allow Bills like 122 to quietly pass through the Assembly in the hopes that nobody catches up to their intent and their language when it's attached to this Bill. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out readiness for economic growth, environmental safeguards, voluntarily apply for a minister's screening, establish class assessment processes where projects have common characteristics, and these fines all attached to this Bill mean radically different things than what the public understands. It means totally different things.

And I go back to my earlier point: this particular party want to get rid of the unions. They want to get rid of the Crowns. They want to get rid of the social causes. They don't want any environmental standards or monitoring that this Bill is part of. They don't want any of those things in the way.

And the sad reality, Mr. Speaker, is they have some people in their corner convinced that's the way to go. But there's going to be a whole new whack of thinkers that are going to come along and read this party for their, quite frankly, for their language to make sure it fits the right intent of the Bill 122, but more so, Mr. Speaker, of what they intend to do.

Now I want to point out a number of years ago we worked with a number of different companies. And most companies are pretty responsible, Mr. Speaker. Most of them are pretty responsible. The ones that we dealt with, we wanted to make sure that they came along to Saskatchewan with a good attitude and a willingness to work together. And we found that if you actually sought out those companies and sat down and negotiated with those companies, that they'd do the responsible thing, Mr. Speaker. They would do the responsible thing.

And you don't have to try and fool people with language that you have attached in this Bill. Just do the right thing and follow through with the intent of the Bill and what the people think the intent is. Not what your language expert tells you to say and some of the puppet masters of Alberta saying, put this word in, it'll really confuse them. Put this word in, it'll make it look like we're doing something; and put that word in and we'll take all of these shortcuts. We'll make more money for you guys, but in the process we'll just ruin the environment for many, many years to come.

[21:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I talked about some of the companies we've dealt with in the past, I talked about the abandoned mines in northern Saskatchewan. Cameco and COGEMA are good companies. They work really closely with our environmental folks. These are professional people that work in the environmental field. There are many, many people that have

served this province for many years — very, very good, knowledgeable environmental technicians and people that I have complete confidence in.

And when they sat down with the companies, we didn't talk about language and different words to confuse the public. We said, let's do the real thing here. Let's be responsible on the environmental safeguards. Let's go through a process. Let's make sure we attract your investment. Let's make sure we leave something behind. Let's leave something tangible here for the public and the people to see and to benefit from. And most of all, the environment being one of those good, solid causes and one of those standards that we ought to look at to try and protect.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you start talking about the abandoned mines in northern Saskatchewan, there was a number of companies . . . And we tried to research back over time. As you know, companies change hands, they change names, and they sometimes survive. And sometimes they do, and sometimes they morph into a different company. Sometimes they just disappear.

But after we researched and looked back in some of the years and looked at some of the companies operating in northern Saskatchewan, all the companies came through. All the companies came through and they said, look, we were part of that process and that project. And we'll do the right thing. If the government comes along and puts some money down, we will do our part to come along and put some money down as well. Let's be partners. Let's not try and circumvent the environmental regulations. Let's try and work together to protect the environment.

And, Mr. Speaker, there was a number of companies from Alberta that came along the uranium mines up in the North, Gunnar and Lorado being two of the mines that I remember. There was a company out of Alberta that actually assumed responsibility for that site. And they said to us, look, if the federal government comes along and the province comes along, we will come along and do our part. And we'll start cleaning up some of these abandoned mines that operated in the 1950s and the 1960s, and we'll do our part. We'll do our part.

So what happened, Mr. Speaker — and talk about leadership — is this NDP [New Democratic Party] party got up and, like many other folks before us, we wanted to take the responsible position from our perspective to make sure companies were invited in to solve some of the problems that they created, not trying to take shortcuts like being proposed by Bill 122.

You ought to tell your puppet masters in Alberta that environmental regulation in Saskatchewan will not be circumvented, will not be lessened for the sake of your bottom line profit, that there's going to be a balance between the environment and the economy. There's going to be real benefits for our people. That's what you ought to tell them. You ought to tell them that, very clear.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we met with these companies to look at the environmental cleanup of a number of mines in northern Saskatchewan, as I had mentioned, these companies came along. And today you see a \$30 million deal in northern

Saskatchewan being administered by the Saskatchewan Research Council, and they're cleaning up some of the abandoned mines of the '50s and of the '60s all throughout the North to make sure that they've done the responsible thing.

Now if that party had been in power then, with Acts like this it would have never, ever occurred, Mr. Speaker. It would have never occurred. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that if you take shortcuts, most companies will take advantage of them. They will not try and develop that respectful relationship with the government that affords them all these outs.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about readiness for economic growth as part of your agendas to deign to change the environmental Act, we don't buy that one bit. We don't buy that language in this Bill one bit. And the reason why we don't buy that language is primarily because you guys have not provided the leadership on any of these environmental fronts. That's the reason why — zero leadership. So your language doesn't have the effect on this opposition or any environmental group primarily because of your attitude and your position and your right wing thinkers that say, let's get as much as we can from this resource. To heck with the rules and regulations. Let's use new buzzwords to confuse the people, but in the meantime we'll try and get away with every rule and regulation we can.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I go back to the relationship that we established with some of these companies, and I think the number — and I could be corrected — we ended up cleaning up 40 abandoned mines in northern Saskatchewan. Now that process is unfolding, and those guys had nothing to do with it across the way . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, and a member chirps from his seat. Mr. Speaker, this government, this NDP government, put that in place.

There's a federal Liberal government in place in Ottawa, and there was some companies that were willing to stand up. Those are the three parties that put this in place. Your party, sir, and your government had absolutely nothing to do with that. Zero to do with that. But the main thing is that environmental support, leadership, and putting in good regulations and working with the companies, that was compliments of this past administration. And you're welcome.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that's the point that I would like to make is that any time this particular minister or that party proposes environmental changes, it is not meant to protect the environment in any way, shape, or form. I've made this statement time and time again, Mr. Speaker, and again I go back to what I think that minister and that party has done that is significant, significant on the environmental front. The only significant thing that I've seen them do is they announced that the provincial toilet replacement rebate program was extended. That's about it, you know.

And so one of the things that I tell people is that you take one of their biggest legislative agendas, their biggest legislative agenda, and there's nothing there. But you take the most simple point of extending your provincial toilet program and you guys can claim environmental superiority to what we did as a government. Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

So I point out to a lot of folks, hurray, hurray, they're doing

something that they think will really gain them votes on the environmental front. They are extending their provincial toilet replacement program. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask one of the Pages to get a copy of that and send that over to the member from Shellbrook because he has to read that. That's some pretty good, interesting stuff and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I've been listening fairly intently and in many occasions I'm trying to draw exactly how the comments relate to Bill 122. I think we can further draw the mark closer to 121 than the Bill before us right now, *The Environmental Assessment Amendment Act*. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the connection I have to *The Environmental Assessment Act* is this government, this minister, and this party — Bill 122 — they are talking about some of their experience and their background on the environmental front and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they haven't done anything significant on the environmental front. It's been zero in a sense of success. Zero in a sense of even trying, Mr. Speaker. So what I wanted to do was to draw something that they may have done on the environmental front that would be significant, more significant than this Bill. And the only thing I could find, Mr. Speaker, was they did extend the provincial toilet replacement rebate program. That's the connection, Mr. Speaker.

And the reason why it's such a connection is everybody in my family said there's an announcement by the minister on the newspaper. So we all grabbed the paper to see what this is about. Well the provincial toilet replacement program was announced. So the people in the North said, wow, what leadership. So what I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is to draw the parallel. To draw the parallel is, I wonder if their provincial toilet replacement rebate program would fit under some of the language of readiness for economic growth, or would it be able to voluntarily apply for minister's screening, you know, or the other thing is would it be eligible for the class assessment process where projects have common characteristics like a provincial camp toilet? Would this apply?

See I'm trying to draw the parallel, Mr. Speaker, because when you talk about leadership, provincial toilet replacement rebate program is pretty significant from those guys. That's their baby. Now I'm trying to say from our end it goes much deeper than that. And that's why Bill No. 122 is quite significant, Mr. Speaker, and that's the correlation or that's the connection that I would make is that they put wording in, they put wording in some of these Bills that mean absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing. And they have Bills left and right and I'm trying to figure out, okay all this wording, all these Bills, what do they exactly do? And I see absolutely nothing.

So I'm really trying to see what they've done. And I've looked through a lot of newspapers and a lot of Bills and researched documents and about the only thing I found was the provincial toilet replacement rebate program. That's the only thing of significant environmental achievement that I see this government creating, Mr. Speaker.

So I would point out to everybody, going back to my examples of working with those companies, is that SRC, the

Saskatchewan Research Council, I think have undertaken a project where they're going to do a bunch of work to determine what needs to be done in some of these abandoned mines. They're putting out RFPs [request for proposal]. They're going to get the companies to do the work.

I understand that many people in the Athabasca Basin are involved. There's just a lot of co-operation, Mr. Speaker. And we haven't got a recent update as to what they're doing and where things are at, but we do know that there's some good work being done. And that good work, Mr. Speaker, is being done by people of the Athabasca Basin, of people in the mining companies, as a former provincial NDP government, of the former federal Liberal government, and of course of some good environmentally responsible companies that had to have a little bit of pushing and a little bit of shoving, but they finally did say, yes, that's the responsible thing to do. And they came forward, Mr. Speaker.

And that's exactly our point. You guys, we know, we know when you use language such as this in Bill 122 that you have no intention of following some of what people think you're going to do. You have zero intent to do that. Do you know why you have zero intent? Is your history and your practice dictates that. And the response that people have of some of the environmental standards or procedures you put in place, they say, well that's the Saskatchewan Party. Those are just words they use to confuse us. They never intend to give any company a \$250,000 per day fine. When's the last time they had got that kind of fine? I bet you not one company was fined under that government, Mr. Speaker. Not one. Because why? They threw out the environmental rules and regulations a long time ago, a long time ago.

So what's going to happen to our forests? What's going to happen to our water, to our land, and to our air, Mr. Speaker? And all they talk about is readiness for economic growth. What a nice deflection from the real agenda, and that is to have 10 or 12 environmental messes, such as Fort McMurray, throughout Saskatchewan, where you take a look at Fort McMurray from satellite and it's a big black hole in northern Alberta where the environment was allowed to rapidly deteriorate, where there's no checks and balances, as I mentioned. And if you don't think that people in Alberta know that, they bloody well know, Mr. Speaker. And I know as well that we'll have a lot of problems in this province if we don't start looking after the environment and putting proper rules and regulations attached to the rules and attend to the regulatory process such as Bill No. 122.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again you go down to the satellite imagery of Western Canada, and I challenge any one of the members of the Saskatchewan Party to do that. Go ahead and do that and have a look. Have a look at what is being, the damage being created on the environment. And you wonder why some people in Saskatchewan are saying, no, we don't want to be like Alberta. We want to be a very good province. We want to be a very solid province that has good schools, good roads, a good economy, a diversified economy.

[21:30]

And I bet you 99 per cent of them would say, yes, we do want to make sure that the environment is protected as well. Every

inch of this province has people looking after it and people demanding that we don't lessen environment regulations, that we actually strengthen and broaden it and bring the companies in to be a part of that process.

And that's where I use, Mr. Speaker, I use the example of the abandoned mines in northern Saskatchewan. You know, that is one of the things that people ought to know, is that we attracted companies to become part of the solution. We didn't give them a free rein saying, do what you want. Get that resource out of the ground, and if something happens in the future, well it's too bad. It's too bad. Somebody else will clean up that mess. No, no, Mr. Speaker. That's not the way it ought to work.

So when the Saskatchewan Party presents things like this sort and guys that try to disguise it as a readiness for economic growth, the people of Saskatchewan are saying, we've seen that act before. We have been fooled before, but it isn't going to happen again.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important is that this Bill and other Bills, other environmental Bills, other environmental Bills we will be scrutinizing on a regular, consistent basis. on a regular, consistent basis. And I'm putting the Sask Party on notice that if you think little buzz words like readiness for economic growth in this Bill is going to confuse the masses or confuse us, you got another think coming. You got to rethink that one, Mr. Speaker, because that isn't on.

And, Mr. Speaker, if they believe that the wording on these Bills — some of the backbenchers — are what they're going to follow, well you ought to talk to your puppet masters in Alberta, and they will tell you, no, no. That's not what that means. It really means shortcuts for us to come along, get some of your oil, and do what we've got to do to make a quick profit. And this notion of sharing, this notion of environmental regulation, well we don't like those kinds of notions because it hurts us oil companies.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think overall with this particular Bill, I look at it. I do the comparisons. I look at the history. I look at some of the things that we did and some of the programs that were announced over the years. And you look at the wind project. You look at some of the conservation efforts. You look at Mr. Prebble's report. There's just a wide variety of environmental leadership from the former administration. And about all that I've seen this administration do that is of some significance was a provincial toilet replacement rebate program. You guys extended that, and if that's the extent of your environmental leadership, then this province ought to be very concerned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I would remind the member to address his comments to the Chair, through the Chair to the other side of the House.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Prince Albert bellows from his seat. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage him to go to the Chair and through the Chair because obviously, Mr. Speaker, he should know about environmental challenges because what he should have said when he announced his support for the mill in Meadow Lake: well this is our readiness for growth strategy. So in the future, what happened was the

mill in Meadow Lake . . . or the mill in P.A. [Prince Albert] shut down.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what people ought to know is that . . . Again I go back to my example of how readiness for economic growth as proposed by the Saskatchewan Party, the member from Prince Albert ought to know that there are two significant differences and understandings of what the word means — readiness for economic growth: that's their understanding, and then there's the people of Saskatchewan with the NDP's understanding of what is meant by environmental regulation, Mr. Speaker. So again, I look at the Bill No. 122 — nothing there, nothing there. Just wording that is intended to confuse people.

And I want to go back, Mr. Speaker, to their provincial toilet replacement rebate program. I think this provincial toilet replacement rebate program that they extended was visionary. And, Mr. Speaker, they are saying that they're going to extend this program to “. . . Go Green in their day-to-day lives.” That's what the article says there, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to go on, under the provincial toilet replacement program:

Under the expansion, low-volume and dual-flush toilets installed in municipal and First Nations facilities . . . such as schools and hospitals, and non-profit facilities are now eligible for the rebate.

Wow. And “This applies to all qualifying toilets installed in these facilities . . .” What makes a qualifying toilet, Mr. Speaker? That's what we're trying to figure out. Now how do you go green, how do you go green with a qualifying toilet?

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and the quote goes on:

“Our government is committed to finding real solutions to key environmental issues facing our province,” Minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Nancy Heppner said . . . “This program is helping Saskatchewan residents dramatically reduce the amount of water they use every day.”

So, Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say, “The Provincial Toilet Replacement Rebate Program provides a \$50 rebate on the purchase of either a dual-flush or low-volume . . .” toilet. So out with the higher volume models that use 13 litres and in with the provincial toilet.

So, Mr. Speaker, I go back to my point: if you guys want to pretend to be leaders in the environment, don't use language, you know, like readiness for economic growth. People can see right through it. They can see through it a mile away. The environmental movement in Saskatchewan are a lot brighter than you give them credit for. You know, when you use economic language like that, you are trying to muddy the waters. The fact of the matter is Saskatchewan . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. I would remind the member once again to direct his comments to the Chair and through the Chair.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out to the Chair and through the Chair, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party government ought not to disrespect the intelligence of the environmental movement.

They ought not to diminish the challenge that we face, not just as a province but as a country and as the world, on some of the changing environmental issues and the global warming that people warn us about. They ought not to disrespect the work of many scientists and people throughout the world that have warned us of some of the impending challenges. And, Mr. Speaker, they ought not to put wording in there that simply deflects what their real intent of allowing companies to come into Saskatchewan and do what they want, when they want with no environmental regard for what they take out or leave behind, Mr. Speaker.

That's my point when I'm talking about Bill 122. And when I make light of the provincial toilet replacement rebate program, the whole message is they have not provided leadership. I think they've got to buy like 56 million toilets to make up for some of the water that some of these companies use in one day. So you do the addition, Mr. Speaker, 56,000 toilets for one day, and you do the math and times that by the flushing, and I think you've got to have something like 378 billion toilets under their program to make up for some of the challenges that they have created on the water quality in Saskatchewan over the next year and a half. I've done the math, Mr. Speaker. And I challenge some of the backbenchers . . . Maybe the member from Carrot River might have the math. He's pretty good at budget numbers. He might be able to come along and give us some information that's contrary to what I just pointed out.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will just point out to the minister his whole notion of a screening process, what is that about, Mr. Speaker? What is a screening process? If you give us X amount of thousand dollars as a donation, that makes you eligible for the screening process? Is that the deal? Hey, you're on a list. Guess what? You give us a couple hundred thousand bucks, and your screening process, you're automatically on.

That is very, very dangerous to do that because companies will tend to think that they can do that — buy you off, pay you off under the guise of a political donation and bang, all of a sudden you're under the screening process. The minister can say, hey, I'm going to run here, so how about you help me win this area and I'll put you as part of my voluntary screening process. You ought to leave this in the professional people's hands. Let them decide. Let them look at how some of these projects and programs are being implemented and screened. Let them become independent of your political process so that we're able to protect Saskatchewan's water, Saskatchewan's land, Saskatchewan's forests, and Saskatchewan's air, Mr. Speaker.

Now I go back to a long list of some of the issues that I spoke about, Mr. Speaker. I spoke about partnership that we had with industry. I spoke about the number of wells that were dug under this NDP government, of how we've seen the economy boom. We've seen the economy boom. And when these guys took over, the economy was booming, building, and money in the bank. Now we're seeing that the economy is levelling off. It's levelling off, and it's going to start to drop, Mr. Speaker.

What happens there is these guys, they know that they're messing up the economy. We know they're messing up the economy. So they try and do a compromise. They tell these companies, please don't go back to Alberta because they announced that their royalty challenge is over with. So we might all head out to Alberta again. How about if we compromise on the environmental regulations? How does that sound? How does that sound, Mr. Speaker? I think that's the deal attached to Bill 122. We'll give you a good screening process. We'll diminish the regulations and the rules. And please don't go back to Alberta. Stay here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you're on your hands and knees to have people stay with you, that's not leadership. That's not leadership. And that's why about the only thing of significance . . . And that's why you announce the provincial toilet replacement rebate program. Because really you had nothing else. They had nothing else on the agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I look at the whole notion. This is another good one and I mentioned it earlier:

A regulation will be required to establish what kinds of developments may be subject to class assessment. Our intention would be to seek advice from industry and other stakeholders about what sectors of the economy might benefit from a class assessment approach.

So they're saying, they're saying, okay we'll have a class assessment process and we can make sure that once we look at a project, if it fits all the criteria, then every other project that fits under that criteria, we'll treat them the same to streamline regulation. And so we say, okay — great. So who do they ask for advice? Not the professionals within SERM [Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management]. They don't ask them that. They don't ask their provincial counterparts. They don't ask them that. They don't ask their federal counterparts. They don't ask the environmental movement. Who do they ask? They ask the people to do the class assessment of their industry.

So if that isn't evidence enough to the Sask Party and their caucus that you're being played here, then you ought to wake up and read what your Bills are being . . . what's being said about your Bills. You're not only asking for a screening process . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I've been listening to the member speak now for about 14 minutes. This is the third time I've had to remind him about the rule about addressing his language to the Speaker and through the Speaker. I would appreciate if the member from Athabasca would pay attention to the rules of the House.

Mr. Belanger: — So, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that people ought to be worried about, ought to be worried about, is all Saskatchewan ought to be worried about, is when you propose, when you propose shortcuts like this, of this magnitude on the environmental front, and not only do you propose shortcuts but you're also allowing class assessment processes where all projects within a certain class have a free ride, you are creating some significant challenges for the environment. You've got to get it through a lot of people's head that we are creating a significant shortcut and a significant

problem, Mr. Speaker.

Now one of the things that I was really amazed at the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that people were saying, look, we like Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is a great province to live. It's a great province to raise your family. It's a good province. We've seen oil wells that were just booming when the NDP were in power. We were seeing profits coming in. People were working. The environment are being taken care of — all these great things. And when the people of Saskatchewan were asked, do you want to be like Alberta? And the answer, the resounding answer was, no way, José. That was the resounding answer. Why? Because we want to separate ourselves from Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

[21:45]

We want to separate ourselves from Alberta as a province or say, look, we're not just about profit, Mr. Speaker. We're not just about profit. We want to see the environment protected. We want to see a diversified economy. We want to see social programs enhanced. We want to see rural and northern Saskatchewan build. We want to see all these good things. People of Saskatchewan had a good plan for themselves and a good vision and they had a good attitude about themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Now what these guys done across the way is their political puppet masters in Alberta said, hey you guys, hey you guys, you're a new government; we want some shortcuts. We want a bunch of shortcuts that we can, we can . . . we sure use to make more money for us. And if we make more money for us, guess what? That money's not staying in Saskatchewan; it is being taken out. It is being taken out, Mr. Speaker.

Now wouldn't you think that if oil is being taken out of Saskatchewan that you should do a number of things. First make some money off it because it does belong to the people of Saskatchewan. The second thing you should do is make sure as many people are working for as long as you can. That's pretty darn important, Mr. Speaker.

And the third but equally important thing is, don't ruin the environment — that includes our land and our water and our forests and our air — in the process of extracting Saskatchewan resources, Mr. Speaker. That's what they said. That's what they said, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we've got to be different, we've got to be different than Alberta. That's what the people of Saskatchewan said.

And this Bill, when I look at this Bill, Mr. Speaker, it is doing exactly opposite of what the people of Saskatchewan want. They don't want companies dictating how to set up a screening process. They don't want companies determining which projects are eligible to be considered a class project with other projects. They don't want to see buzzwords, buzzwords like readiness for economic growth, trying . . . [inaudible] . . . of shortcuts, a bunch of shortcuts on the environmental standards, Mr. Speaker. That is not what they want. That is not what they want.

So, Mr. Speaker, I go along and I make all these points time and time again to this minister. And I'm putting the Saskatchewan

Party on notice that we are watching you very closely. And every bit of action that you undertake, whether it's your provincial toilet replacement program or whether it is language on this Bill, we are going to watch exactly what you're doing and what you're trying to do to ensure that you're trying to circumvent . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I would remind the member from Athabasca that this is the final time I will address this issue. You speak to the Chair, direct your language to the Chair and through the Chair.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon.

Mr. Forbes: — Could I have leave to introduce guests, please?

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

Mr. Forbes: — To introduce guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise tonight to introduce a friend to this House. Many of us know Graham Addley, sitting behind the bar back here, a former member for Saskatoon Sutherland who in fact actually occupied a chair along with many of us in the House, and the Deputy Speaker's Chair. And I think he's added an awful lot to his time here in the legislature.

Graham now has taken on a new position. He's working with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan. He's the director of admissions programs. And I know he'll bring an awful lot to those folks. He's got an awful lot of experience dealing with health care and health care policy and he knows how to motivate people.

So I would ask all members here to give Graham a warm welcome, as he is part of us. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — I'm not sure of convention, but I'd like to join the member from Saskatoon Centre in welcoming Mr. Addley back to the House. I think our relationship goes back eight or nine years. We've had good relationships and friendship develop in the intervening years. And I appreciate seeing him back in Canada actually, after his extended stay in the great country of Australia. So welcome back, Mr. Addley.

I recognize the member from Athabasca.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 122 — *The Environmental Assessment Amendment Act, 2009* (continued)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out again, as I have over the evening, is that I want to go back to Fort McMurray, Mr. Speaker. And for brevity's sake I'm going to use the word Fort Mac. Now when I travel out to Fort Mac, Mr. Speaker, as we head west . . . And you can picture this. It talks a lot about the environmental challenges that Saskatchewan faced. As you head west from Buffalo Narrows, what you're leaving behind is you're leaving behind lakes and rivers and streams. Because the land in northern Saskatchewan is very, very beautiful, Mr. Speaker. Beautiful land. You see the lakes and the rivers and the streams. You see the wildlife. You see the forests. You see everything there — just a beautiful piece of land, Mr. Speaker.

Now as you head into Fort McMurray you come up to some rolling hills. And there's a lot less water, Mr. Speaker, around Fort McMurray. There's a lot less water. So as you come along to Fort McMurray and you begin to see some of the environmental challenges of the northern part of Fort McMurray, some of the environmental challenges that are occurring . . . You don't see it in the town, nor do you see it as you head into the community. But it's further north, Mr. Speaker.

And as you look at some of the challenges that they face . . . And rest assured a lot of people know that, a lot of people know what's going on. And we are not against development of our resources. Don't get us wrong. This former NDP government built a big economy and a growing economy and a booming economy. Those guys messed it up, Mr. Speaker. And as we're building this economy, not once in our language did we say, let's compromise on the environmental regulations. Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

So if you want evidence, and you want an example of environmental degradation, go north to Fort McMurray and you will see what I'm talking about when I tell the people in that government that they ought to be a bit more wise about some of the challenges when they talk about environmental shortcuts. You can't be that desperate to keep companies here if you're going to compromise on environmental protection and environmental standards. You ought not to be that desperate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I point out again, as you head west and as you come to Fort McMurray, it's nestled amongst a bunch of large hills. And as you travel there, the community's bustling and moving and everything's going along quite well. And hidden from all that of course, as you head further north, that's where you see a lot of the activity. Which we did. Which we did. And courtesy of some of the oil and gas companies we toured some of the sights. We went out to see what they were doing, and we could see, well the economy was booming. Things were going great. People were working, but there was still some environmental issues that had to be addressed. Anybody travelling there could determine that and could see that, in spades.

So as we sit there and we look around as guests, and we learn and we ask questions and we look at all these things, one thing

that was kind of amazing is the companies actually wanted to do more for the environment than what they were required to do, Mr. Speaker. They want to do more for the environment than what they were required to do. And all they needed was a little bit of leadership, Mr. Speaker, a little bit of leadership and co-operation and partnership. Very simple. Partnership. Bring them into the tent and let's start talking about these issues.

Now as you go further north — and I made this point earlier, and I don't think many of the members across the way heard some of the points that I raised — and as you head further north and you hit Fort Chip. And there's a lot of environmental challenges in the Fort McMurray area, but as you head further north, and this is my point, if we don't learn lessons from Alberta on proper oil and gas development with some good environmental rules and regulations, we are doomed to repeat what they are doing wrong, Mr. Speaker. We are doomed to repeat what they're doing wrong, and we shouldn't do it.

We shouldn't do it, because further north of Fort Mac is a community called Fort Chip. And Fort Chip is mainly made up of Aboriginal people. They are very proud people. And they live on a beautiful area. And I visited Fort Chip, and as I mentioned, I learned a lot about what they do in the community. And I can see some of the environmental challenges even in Fort Chip even though it's a number of miles away.

And although they're trying to embrace development, they are trying to embrace development, many of the leaders in that particular community said, and I said it earlier and I'm going to say again, they've seen a remarkable increase in the cancers in their community and they can't figure out why. They can't figure out why. And some people are pointing to the Fort McMurray expansion and they're saying, we believe it is caused by that operation not following proper rules and environmental regulations. We believe that. And so we say well if you believe that, and you've been talking about that, why aren't you guys fighting? Why aren't you guys bringing these issues forward?

And, Mr. Speaker, because they say nobody believes us, and nobody's fighting for us. Nobody's listening to our concerns as we have the cancer rates in our community soar. Nobody seems to care. That was the message that I heard. Now where in this world would you get a government not caring about a community? For the single most pressing issue on their plate is to make profit, not care for a population, a people that are getting sick and dying from a number of cancers that spiked in the years before when this development occurred.

So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point I'm raising in reference to Bill 122. And again the member from Cannington can bellow again from his seat. We're not taking any environmental advice from that party or that member, Mr. Speaker, because their message, their message and what they have practised in that right wing agenda — don't care for people and don't care for the environment, Mr. Speaker. They never have and they never will. And no matter how much he bellows from his chair, no thanks to your advice. We'll develop our own policy and procedure when it comes to the environmental regulations.

So go back to the point, Mr. Speaker, in Fort Chip. In Fort

Chip, young people are having cancers. Some of the middle-aged people, the older people are having these cancers. So they want to do an inquiry. They want to see if there's a connect between what's going on in their community and what's happening further south of them in the Fort Mac area.

Is anybody doing that work for them? Do they have the resources to do that work for them? Absolutely not. Do they have the recognition for that? Absolutely not. Do they have any mitigating environmental work being done to further protect their health? Absolutely not. And the reason why it's no, no, no, Mr. Speaker, because they had a government in place at the time that did not care about their issues and actually lessened the environmental rules that were in place to do exactly that — protect the environment and the health of all animals and mammals, including humanity, Mr. Speaker. They never did it.

And now today we're seeing the same puppet masters control that government across the way through Bills like this that actually lessen their environmental regulation and authority to make a big difference in the people's lives in Saskatchewan. Now which area is next? Which area is next to suffer from a government that is leaderless, is rudderless, and doesn't want to take on the oil companies? Which community is next? If they're coming to Saskatchewan, we say welcome to them. But there's a responsibility, unlike Alberta, when you come to this province.

And this province of Saskatchewan wants to have environmental protection. They want to make sure they have a process that the public understand, and they want to make sure they have a government that'll not only protect their environment but protect the health of their children, their elders, and their people, Mr. Speaker. And I don't see any evidence of that whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. None whatsoever.

So again I go back to my point. After you visit the area and you hear some of the challenges and the problem, and you say, my goodness, like who is going to help you guys out here? Who is going to do this work? And then we come back to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, after you finish the tour. We do the Fort Mac trip, and we learned so much. We hear the plight. We hear the issues. We hear the challenges. We see all that. And as you come back into Saskatchewan — and this is why it's so very important for the people to understand — as you come back to Saskatchewan of course you're heading east. And as the sun sets . . .

[22:00]

An Hon. Member: — In the east.

Mr. Belanger: — Right. You can actually see . . . That's one thing you got right in the number of years he's been in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

You can see the Earth and you can see the curvature of the Earth. And you can actually see the lakes just like shimmering like a bunch of diamonds in Saskatchewan. These are the northern Saskatchewan lakes. They're shimmering with life. They're shimmering with beauty and, Mr. Speaker, it's an awesome sight to come back from Saskatchewan by aircraft from a visit from Fort McMurray for a number of reasons.

The first reason is we have an abundance of water in northern Saskatchewan. There are many lakes, rivers, and streams, and life is going good. And the second thing is we say to ourselves, well thank goodness we don't have the environmental regulations that those guys have because we have this to protect. And, Mr. Speaker, it really gives you an awesome feeling when you come home to Saskatchewan for seeing that.

So it leads me to my other point in relation to the weakness of Bill 122. When you diminish the regulatory power of a government just for the simple profit of trying to keep, a desperate government trying to keep the oil companies here, what you are doing is you're compromising the future of our children and our grandchildren. So as you come into Saskatchewan, see all these beautiful lakes, more so than ever do you have a responsibility to protect that land because it has much more ecosystem challenges when you put oil and gas in that area than what you do in Alberta with less lakes. You have a more responsible position that you should take and ought to take and, Mr. Speaker, this Bill 122 doesn't do justice to what our environment has and what our ecosystems have in northern Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look at the whole point, the whole point being raised. And I think to myself if these guys, this government is insisting on diminishing the Minister of the Environment's role, why do they always talk about environmental efforts? Why is it they always talk about that? Don't they get the message that you don't own the land today? And the old phrase, you're simply borrowing that from your grandchild. You are simply borrowing that land from your grandchild.

And if they don't have that visionary, futuristic look at the environment, then they ought not to be government, Mr. Speaker. They ought not to be government, Mr. Speaker, because if they think they can diminish the environmental standards and the environmental vision that the people of Saskatchewan have, they've got another think coming, Mr. Speaker, they have another think coming because that's not on. That's not on, Mr. Speaker.

And the other point I would raise, Mr. Speaker, is that the problem they have when they don't look after the environment right, they're taking all these shortcuts to keep the oil companies here, is because they've mismanaged the money of Saskatchewan already. They have mismanaged this province's finances from day one — day one. They didn't know what they were doing then, and they still don't have a clue now.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the resulting effect. And I'll give you the analogy I would use. I drive an old car, and I change oil in that car pretty steady because I want the car to run smooth. And then suppose I go and buy my wife a fur jacket. I don't have enough money to change oil in that car, and guess what? The car degrades more because of poor oil. Now what's happening with the Saskatchewan Party is much the same.

They're running out of money, so they've got to compromise somewhere because they bought themselves a fur coat called the NDP surplus, and they spent that money. So as they have no money to do these things, then what they're going to do is compromise on a number of things. They are not changing oil

in that car like I should.

They are simply reducing regulations, and the puppet masters from Alberta that control that party over there . . . And despite all the backbenchers' howls and arguments, they don't have a clue what's going on. They're mere passengers on that Tory bus. But they are simply being driven, the agenda is being driven by their political masters in Alberta at Saskatchewan's environmental expense. That's the problem, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem.

And we New Democrats say, yes, we want the resources to be developed. But as our leader says, as our leader says, there's a number of things. You want to have investment from the business sector, from government. We want to have . . . make sure we get the working people that are working, the strong labour movement, you want to make sure they're strengthened. And he also said, environmental protection. And those are three fundamental things that these guys across the way don't get right, Mr. Speaker. They don't understand. There are building blocks.

Now I tell people, you contrast what our leader has said in terms of building the economy and how it connects with the environment, and contrast his work throughout the world and contrast his experience throughout the world, even working with an oil company like Nexen. And you do all the analysis, and you compare it to their leader, a member from Swift Current. And there is no comparison, Mr. Speaker, because there's never been any job experience worthwhile mentioning from the leader of that party versus the leader of this New Democratic caucus, Mr. Speaker — none whatsoever.

For any day of the week, Mr. Speaker, if it's on the economy, if it's on attracting investment, or of it being responsible on the environmental front, I would pick my leader against their leader in a split second, Mr. Speaker, because that's exactly what's going to happen. That's exactly what's going to happen when you have an inexperienced leader given a huge surplus and a booming economy. We said, they'll blow the money and they'll go downhill. The economy will flow and they'll start compromising. Then they'll start hiding debt.

And we can see it on this side. And attachment to Bill 122 is one of those steps that you're taking, Mr. Speaker, as you have compromised the environmental integrity as well as the financial integrity of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that these guys don't know what they're doing. Every single Bill that they bring forward, they do not know what they're doing because they're not in control of the agenda. Their inexperience is allowing the puppet masters from Alberta to twist them any which way they want.

And I think that our party and our leader is going to say, hold it guys. Time out. We've got a new act in this province and that new act is coming in 2011, and the people of Saskatchewan are going to help us achieve that, Mr. Speaker. They're going to help us achieve that because of this government's recklessness with our money and certainly with their ignorance of some of the environmental rules and regulations that should be protected, not simply taken away, Mr. Speaker, in a desperate effort to keep the oil companies working in Saskatchewan.

We want them working here, Mr. Speaker. Don't get us wrong. We want them working here. And we invited them here. We set up the stage for them to be here, and they came in record numbers, Mr. Speaker. And they're doing well. But the moment that that party came into place, the first thing that they threw out was environmental integrity — very first thing that they threw out. And you don't think that's one of the building blocks of a province, is to make sure that you protect the environment? Isn't that important to you?

And this Bill by the minister, that she's brought forward, talks about circumventing all the rules and regulations — all of them. And who is going to do the design of these rules and regulations, Mr. Speaker? It's going to be industry. It's going to be industry. My goodness, like don't they have this figured out, that you can't simply transfer that strength that Saskatchewan has and say, here you guys figure it out. We're willing to throw that out as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I look at some of the notions of this particular party and what is being attached, attached to this particular Bill, I say the people of Saskatchewan don't want this Bill. They don't want this Bill. They don't want this leader, Mr. Speaker, and they don't want that party, the damage they have done, the damage they have done. And if they think for one second, for one second trying to get industry to do their work is going to help them out of the slide downhill, Mr. Speaker, the answer is absolutely not.

The people of Saskatchewan, the environmental movement, even industry knows that these guys are making a huge mistake. And if you don't think they are going to take advantage of their inexperience, they will take advantage of their inexperience. And who will pay? The people of Saskatchewan will pay. So I'm telling that minister to withdraw some of the provisions and the powers that she has given to companies at the cost of the Saskatchewan people. She ought to withdraw that.

Because what's happening here as I've said at the outset, this particular party, they're after killing the unions. They're after killing the Crowns. They want to kill the social causes. And the thing that's important with this particular Bill is they want to, they want to kill environmental regulations and monitoring of our environment. Why, Mr. Speaker, why? Why would they do that? If they kill those four particular areas that I speak about tonight, and what happens? It gives them free money, free reign to do what they want and all these causes will be lost.

But there's one small problem, Mr. Speaker, one small problem, and that there's this process called elections. That's the problem. And everywhere we go in this province — and there are 20 caucus members strong here and 15,000 members within our party — we are telling people everywhere we go not only have they mismanaged our money; they've mismanaged our future. And they have destroyed or are destroying our environment, and they're killing off the Crowns. And they're killing off the Crowns.

And they can say, well how about, how about if, how about we do an analysis of their leader against our leader? Well, Mr. Speaker, I see in our leader a businessman that was successful. I see a farmer that is successful. I see a person that is from Saskatchewan that is successful. I've seen a person that has

travelled throughout the world and done many wonderful things with many governments. I see an experienced leader. I see a leader that has a resumé that would make their leader blush. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, above all else, I see success and the winning attitude in our leader when it comes to environmental protection, Mr. Speaker.

And when he becomes premier in 2011, we're going to provide that leadership on the environment, Mr. Speaker. And that's the important message. But these guys don't get it. The backbench doesn't get it. Do you know why they don't get it, Mr. Speaker? Because they aren't even reading their own Act. They aren't even reading their own legislative agenda. Do you know why? Because they're in the dark because the front row is saying to them, you are in the dark because you don't deserve to know. That's why you're in the backbench.

And I hear the member from Moose Jaw North, Moose Jaw North. He bellows from his chair every few minutes, and he mutters out eight words. Every few weeks you hear him muttering out eight words. I don't know what these words are, but by my count . . . First of all, I'm not sure where exactly he's . . . [inaudible] . . . never hear him. But the eight words he mutters out, I figured it out: we're paying that guy 10,000 a word. We're paying him \$10,000 a word to come from Moose Jaw to sit way the heck up there in the backbench and mutter eight words every eight weeks. So, Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty expensive proposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm telling the backbench, wake up. Wake up. Don't just be given a sheet, don't be given a sheet and say, this is what you'll say to the media, and this is what you'll say to your reporters. This is what you say to your constituents, and this is what you say to the papers. You don't just say that.

In this particular party, within the NDP caucus, we have the ability to debate each other, and there are many good debates, Mr. Speaker, many good debates. And this environmental Bill would never pass under our government, Mr. Speaker, never ever, ever pass. Why? Why? Because it is a piece of junk, Mr. Speaker. That's why, Mr. Speaker.

So I would point out to the people throughout Saskatchewanland one thing: that it's not the finances of the province that these guys are messing up. It is now they're compromising the environmental quality that Saskatchewan once enjoyed. And that's a huge, huge shame, Mr. Speaker.

And this minister, by giving the powers that she has presented in this document — to give the powers of screening to herself, giving the power to screen herself or giving the power of these companies to determine whether they fit amongst a certain class, they could avoid the screening process — well that's not what Alberta's doing. They're doing this even at a worse pace and with less regulations. And that government over there has got the Alberta envy. They want to be like Alberta, they say. Well the Saskatchewan people are saying, no way; we don't want that. We don't want that.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, for a fact, that the future of Fort Chip in northern Alberta, if left unchecked, is going to be affecting Saskatchewan soon. And that area of northern Saskatchewan with the lakes, with the rivers, with the streams,

with the animals, with the healthy forests, it is now being impacted by the Fort McMurray activity — acid rain. You travel some of these areas near the border; you can begin to see the effects. And what is this government doing, Mr. Speaker? What's their priority? Their priority is the provincial toilet replacement rebate program was extended. It was extended. And that's about the style of leadership that we can expect from this minister and that party, Mr. Speaker.

[22:15]

So I'm telling the backbench, the backbenchers of that party, including that eight-word wonder from Moose Jaw North, that you ought to stand up in your place as our duly elected MLAs and say, no we don't want to see our environmental regulations lessened. No, we're not going to simply stand by and let the resources being taken out of our province. No, we're not going to compromise on the future of our children's land and our forests and our lakes and rivers and streams. No, we're not going to let everybody come run roughshod over Saskatchewan's people. They ought to stand up on their feet and fight back, fight back with the many people that are saying, we shouldn't do this. We shouldn't do this.

Now where is it in the book of politics is it written that you come from wherever they come from, and you can't speak? You can't speak. Where is it in the book of politics saying that once you're elected as a right wing member of any government, you're not allowed to think out of the box? What's out there that's saying, your job is to give away the resources without any regard for Saskatchewan? It must be a right wing book of politics, Mr. Speaker, because in this party, under this leader, there is exciting policy being developed, Mr. Speaker.

There's some really good debates, Mr. Speaker, but there's one thing very clear. We'll not compromise on the quality, nor what the people of Saskatchewan want. And they want a fair, balanced government that protects their interests every single day, Mr. Speaker. And that confidence in that particular party is dropping pretty fast. It is dropping pretty fast. And the reason why it's dropping fast, Mr. Speaker, is that they don't have an idea what they're doing.

They're inexperienced. Their inexperience is just really hurting Saskatchewan. And for the minister to come along and saying, okay we're going to lessen these environmental programs attached to Bill 122 — again, inexperience. We need leadership. We need leadership to assert who the people of Saskatchewan are, not what that party's about, Mr. Speaker. We need to tap into what Saskatchewan people are saying. And what people of Saskatchewan are saying is, if oil companies want to come here, they are welcome. But we also have the environment to protect, we've got roads to build, and we've got a future to be built. And you have to be part of that; otherwise you're not welcome here.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is the problem that that particular minister and that party has had since it got into this office. They don't know what to do. The first year and a half, they're saying, oh my goodness, all this wealth. What do we do with it? Now it's two and a half years later. Show me the money. They don't have it, Mr. Speaker. They blew it.

So next to go, next to go, next to go are the Crowns. Next to go

are the environmental regulations and rules that we put in place to protect this land. Next to go are the unions. And, Mr. Speaker, surprising, they have them all on their sights, all on their sights.

And I tell the people of Saskatchewan, it's the people of Saskatchewan on Bills like this, on Bill 122 where you weaken your environmental rules and regulations, that this is exactly what they're about. This is exactly what they're doing. They're going to come back. They're going to finish off Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're going to finish us off. And what's going to happen is we're going to be a province that's going to have no Crowns, a province that's going to have no strong unions, a province where there's environmental challenges galore, and a problem where nobody wants to come.

That right wing government wants to do that, Mr. Speaker. And these Bills are proof. They're proof that's exactly what they want to do, Mr. Speaker. The list is wide, and I'm going to be talking about that over the next several months. And, Mr. Speaker, people ought to know. People ought to know that there is an alternative, Mr. Speaker. And that's why this government is going to stand up for people. They're going to fight that right wing machine over there that is trying to confuse people and hurt people. And they can do it in many, many ways such as this Act, Mr. Speaker, such as this Act.

And I say today, shame on them. Shame on them. And shame on them because the people of Saskatchewan watch this channel. They listen to what's going on, and they will not be confused. They will not be confused.

And us on this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we look at this Bill and we say to ourselves, where has the gumption gone from the backbench? Where has the gumption gone from the backbench? They are simply not a factor in this Assembly, not a factor in this Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, it's been almost 15 years that I've been in this Assembly, and in those 15 years, I was not once told by my party or by my leader or by anybody on this side what to think and how to think, Mr. Speaker.

We're a party that's on the move. We have our debates but we also have our principles. So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this whole notion, we are going to defend the Crowns. We're going to defend the Crowns because that battle is coming up. That battle is coming up. These guys have privatized so many components of the Crowns and they had told the people they wouldn't do it. One strike against them.

They said they wouldn't bring in essential services. They brought it in, Mr. Speaker. And they said they would run a balanced government. Well that's gone out the window. And now, Mr. Speaker, environmental integrity and protection of the environment with this Act, and how the minister has positioned oil companies over professionals that work for this government, that is also gone.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I warn the people of Saskatchewan. I warn the people of Saskatchewan that you've got to really watch what goes on. You've got to really watch what goes on because across the way there, those are not centre people. Those are not Liberals. The Liberals have been given an assignment that gets them all the grief. It's the Tories over there that are in charge.

And the worst part about it — it's not the Tories over there, it's the Tories over there in Alberta. They're in charge, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the backbench, where have the Liberals gone? Where have the fair-minded people gone? Where have the centre people gone? Where have they gone? All I see over there are Tories, Mr. Speaker. And I go on to my point, and I've made it time and time again. I hear a number of people yipping and yapping . . . And somebody asked me my opinion the other day of the MLA from Meadow Lake. I said just a tiny Tory. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what he is.

They're not protecting the environment, they're not protecting our land, they're not protecting our people. And a lot of the Aboriginal people in the North know it and they aren't ever going to forget it, Mr. Speaker. They won't forget it. The damage that could be caused by this party is reckless. It is reckless and the people of Saskatchewan are going to make them pay. We have not even begun the fight. That fight is coming very quick.

But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan ought to know every Bill — every Bill that they bring forward, including Bill 122 — no matter how benign they make it appear, we know there are ulterior motives to their language. We know that there are ulterior motives that don't protect the people of Saskatchewan's interest when they use language that they've used in this Assembly.

And why do we know? It's what they do. That's what they do. Why do we know is their puppet masters live in Alberta where the same thing is happening. And that's why I tell people this is not just about economic justice or social justice. It's also about environmental justice as well. You ought to take those aspects that you talk about and really practise what you preach, practise what you preach. Instead of trying to be cute with the wording, practise what you preach. Practise what people of Saskatchewan have sent you to do here, is to fight for them and their issues in your areas.

Stop muzzling your backbench and stop making them irrelevant in this Assembly. Because every person that occupies benches on this side of the House, or if they're on that side of the House when we're in government, we are never irrelevant in the discussion, Mr. Speaker, never ever irrelevant. We are always relevant, Mr. Speaker, always.

So I point out to the backbench there, come on. You know, get up, stand up. Instead of uttering eight words every two weeks, why don't you utter these words. Why don't you say, my goodness, I hope our environmental stewardship isn't the same model as our financial stewardship. And I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, that's the same model that's out there.

Every day I pray, Mr. Speaker, I pray every day, please don't mess up things any further, you guys because somebody has to come and clean up your mess eventually. And the more advice you're given to not do it, the less work we have to do cleaning up and the more work we have to do building up Saskatchewan in 2011 and beyond, Mr. Speaker. The less time that you're in crisis management mode when we assume government in 2011, the more you can build that brave, bold, new economy, Mr.

Speaker, that has Crowns, unions, and the environment as part of the pillars of building this economy for a lasting Saskatchewan future that our grandkids could be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

So again, as I mentioned at the outset to the backbenchers: please speak up in your caucus. Because my goodness, people want you to speak up in your caucus. And if you can't speak up, then step aside because we will stand up for the people of Saskatchewan to speak what needs to be spoken and to say the words that need to be told, Mr. Speaker.

So again I would point out to all the people that are listening: one Bill, two or three amendments. And they think we're not going to be a tough opposition and fight them every inch of the way and have this winning spirit developed on this side with an experienced, better leader than theirs and with a better plan, a better vision. That to me translates into a bigger, better, stronger Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we will never, ever, ever quit, Mr. Speaker. We will continue fighting for the people of Saskatchewan.

And I want to ask my members to applaud the provincial toilet replacement rebate program. Hey, you know, they're trying. They're trying. But my goodness, maybe it's time, maybe it's time they got with the program.

So I think it's really important that I end on these two notes. The point that I would end on, Mr. Speaker, is that Bill No. 122, *An Act to amend The Environmental Assessment Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Forest Resources Management Act* is not worth the paper it's written on. I've said it to the minister about every single Bill that she has presented. And the reason why I am telling the people that is because they have taken words that we think intend to do a certain thing but they have no intention. So don't let them pull the wool over your eyes because that's not what Saskatchewan people are about. And, Mr. Speaker, that is what is really worrisome to us, is the sneaky style of wordsmithing that this government is so fond of doing to try and pull the wool over Saskatchewan people's eyes.

And the second point I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a leader that extols the virtues of the union movement, of a strong Crown sector, of inviting businesses to be part of the booming growing economy, but also speaks about the balance with the environment. And that's something that's really key, Mr. Speaker. And you put the agenda, you put the vision, you put the plan and, importantly, you put the resumé of my leader against their leader and, Mr. Speaker, you will see, you will see that in 2011 the people of Saskatchewan will have a clear choice, a very clear choice, and a choice that is radically different. And I think that in 2011 that choice will be elect him as premier and the New Democratic Party as our government. And then you're going to see action on the environment to make sure it continues building up this great province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to close on that note. I think it's important that people are going to be expressing this opinion as we go along. I know that people want to know more about this Bill, hear more about this Bill, hear many of the other stories about this Bill. And the list goes on about some of the problems with this Bill. I think it's very, very important and people ought

to be, ought to be paying attention to what these guys are doing.

We cleaned up one mess in 1991, and it took us 16 years to clean up that mess. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why they used the phrase, 16 years as their time frame because they do not want to go pre-1991, because that's where this province took a huge backwards step and went into deficit and destroyed the environment. And it's the same people that occupy those chairs that occupy these chairs today. And it's time to get rid of them, I say.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — It now being 10:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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