



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

| Name of Member | Political Affiliation | Constituency |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Allchurch, Denis | SP | Rosthern-Shellbrook |
| Atkinson, Pat | NDP | Saskatoon Nutana |
| Belanger, Buckley | NDP | Athabasca |
| Bjornerud, Hon. Bob | SP | Melville-Saltcoats |
| Boyd, Hon. Bill | SP | Kindersley |
| Bradshaw, Fred | SP | Carrot River Valley |
| Brkich, Greg | SP | Arm River-Watrous |
| Brotten, Cam | NDP | Saskatoon Massey Place |
| Chartier, Danielle | NDP | Saskatoon Riversdale |
| Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken | SP | Saskatoon Silver Springs |
| Chisholm, Michael | SP | Cut Knife-Turtleford |
| D'Autremont, Dan | SP | Cannington |
| Draude, Hon. June | SP | Kelvington-Wadena |
| Duncan, Hon. Dustin | SP | Weyburn-Big Muddy |
| Eagles, Doreen | SP | Estevan |
| Elhard, Wayne | SP | Cypress Hills |
| Forbes, David | NDP | Saskatoon Centre |
| Furber, Darcy | NDP | Prince Albert Northcote |
| Gantfoer, Hon. Rod | SP | Melfort |
| Harpauer, Hon. Donna | SP | Humboldt |
| Harper, Ron | NDP | Regina Northeast |
| Harrison, Hon. Jeremy | SP | Meadow Lake |
| Hart, Glen | SP | Last Mountain-Touchwood |
| Heppner, Hon. Nancy | SP | Martensville |
| Hickie, Darryl | SP | Prince Albert Carlton |
| Higgins, Deb | NDP | Moose Jaw Wakamow |
| Hutchinson, Hon. Bill | SP | Regina South |
| Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi) | SP | Wood River |
| Iwanchuk, Andy | NDP | Saskatoon Fairview |
| Junor, Judy | NDP | Saskatoon Eastview |
| Kirsch, Delbert | SP | Batoche |
| Krawetz, Hon. Ken | SP | Canora-Pelly |
| LeClerc, Serge | SP | Saskatoon Northwest |
| Lingenfelter, Dwain | NDP | Regina Douglas Park |
| McCall, Warren | NDP | Regina Elphinstone-Centre |
| McMillan, Tim | SP | Lloydminster |
| McMorris, Hon. Don | SP | Indian Head-Milestone |
| Michelson, Warren | SP | Moose Jaw North |
| Morgan, Hon. Don | SP | Saskatoon Southeast |
| Morin, Sandra | NDP | Regina Walsh Acres |
| Nilson, John | NDP | Regina Lakeview |
| Norris, Hon. Rob | SP | Saskatoon Greystone |
| Ottenbreit, Greg | SP | Yorkton |
| Quennell, Frank | NDP | Saskatoon Meewasin |
| Reiter, Hon. Jim | SP | Rosetown-Elrose |
| Ross, Laura | SP | Regina Qu'Appelle Valley |
| Schriemer, Joceline | SP | Saskatoon Sutherland |
| Stewart, Lyle | SP | Thunder Creek |
| Taylor, Len | NDP | The Battlefords |
| Tell, Hon. Christine | SP | Regina Wascana Plains |
| Toth, Hon. Don | SP | Moosomin |
| Trew, Kim | NDP | Regina Coronation Park |
| Vermette, Doyle | NDP | Cumberland |
| Wall, Hon. Brad | SP | Swift Current |
| Weekes, Randy | SP | Biggar |
| Wilson, Nadine | SP | Saskatchewan Rivers |
| Wotherspoon, Trent | NDP | Regina Rosemont |
| Yates, Kevin | NDP | Regina Dewdney |

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to make an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked for leave to make an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to members for leave for this introduction.

To you and through you to all members of the Assembly and those guests who have gathered, it's an honour for me to introduce a group of very, very special guests who have joined us today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I will not be introducing them all individually for the fear of missing one but, Mr. Speaker, we're joined by veterans of this country and by those who continue to serve her with courage and pride.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, just earlier today we celebrated an event called the End of an Era in the rotunda. We were joined by all members of the Assembly and the Leader of the Opposition and of course our honoured guests, Legion representatives and veterans and a number of others who joined us for this ceremony.

Mr. Speaker, Canada is a country, as you know, that came of age during World War I. Our country took its first steps towards nationhood as our soldiers took steps towards Vimy Ridge and Ypres and the Somme and Passchendaele and the battles of World War I. The brave men and women that served on those battlefields gave us a voice and established a legacy that the Canadian Forces continue to uphold to this very day.

The last number of years have brought with them the passing of the few remaining veterans that served in the Great War. And with their passing have gone the last tangible links to this chapter in our history, a chapter of this remarkable generation, of its heroism and of the coming of age of our country.

Last Friday, Mr. Speaker, on the National Day of Remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, a commemorative ceremony was held to mark the end of an era and honour all First World War servicemen and women at the National War Memorial and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa. And earlier today, as I've mentioned, members joined with each other to engage in a similar ceremony of remembrance here in the Legislative Assembly in our rotunda.

Men and women gathered here this morning, Mr. Speaker, and

last week in our nation's capital to mark an end of an era, did so as an act of remembrance and as an act of gratitude. We owe a debt of sincere thanks and must never forget the defining contribution of those who served, of those who came back and helped continue to build our great country.

Mr. Speaker, there is a book of reflection that has been started as a result of this morning's ceremony. Many have signed it already. It's available in the rotunda, and we invite anyone that is able to come to the Legislative Assembly to sign that book of reflection and to pay homage and thanks to our veterans, certainly of World War I, but all veterans who have served so bravely and with such great courage.

Mr. Speaker, the last living link of service to the Great War died in February, with the death of Mr. Babcock that has been well-documented. This is why we take this opportunity to gather as we did this morning. But, Mr. Speaker, we should resolve that it not be about one afternoon on a day in April, that it be a constant act, this act of remembrance, this sense of gratitude that we have. And we can show it in various ways. We can volunteer for a cause. We can make sure we are reaching out to those who are still in service or perhaps those veterans who would enjoy that kind of camaraderie from the rest of us. Mr. Speaker, may we continue to remember in the way we conduct our lives on a daily basis.

And I would ask all members of this Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming these heroes, these veterans and members, representatives of the Legion to our Legislative Assembly, to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has asked, I'm understanding, leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Premier and thank the Premier for the opportunity to join with him earlier today in the rotunda of this beautiful building where we come to do the work of the people, to join with veterans as well as our Colonel Keddy. Thank you for being here with us today. And also the member from Wood River who emceed the function in the rotunda, thank you for that as well.

To the other guests who came to recognize and honour the men and women of the services, both present and past — today, particularly past — and the individuals from the Great War, veterans who did the very honourable thing and went to defend our country, and some 650,000 who left to do that heavy lifting and to defend this country, and also to the 68,000 who didn't come back to their family and friends and community to run the farm or to look after fisheries in their area of Canada, this was a very, very important day. Of course with the passing of John

Babcock, the last veteran of that Great War, gave us occasion, sad as it is, to come together and not only honour those memories but celebrate what Canada is all about.

I join with the Premier in asking all of us to sign the book of reflection which is in the rotunda, to add our names to the respect that we have for those people who were involved and are involved in the heroic efforts at any time during the history of our country and today, to pay respect for those people. To not only pay respect, but to give the admiration that is deserved. I think the fact of the matter is that we often take that for granted, and it's taken for granted in many ways.

It's taken for granted in the amount of compensation we give to the men and women who do that heavy lifting. And I think we need to do more when it comes to pensions and recognition for the work done. And like all people in Saskatchewan and across Canada, we in the official opposition want to honour all of you and all of them for the work that they have done on behalf of our country.

I'd be remiss also if I didn't mention, I believe the choir, Mr. Premier, was from Campbell, and the beautiful music they provided on this occasion for the colour guard and for all the members of the Legislative Assembly. And I know many from the government side and the opposition side were there to pay respect and honour.

I want to join with the Premier and welcome our friends here today and hope you come back many times to visit with us, not only here in the Assembly but personally as well. Thank you and good luck.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Request leave for an extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this honourable Assembly, a delightful and engaged group of Saskatchewan women seated in your gallery. Today I have the honour of introducing members of Saskatchewan's Red Hat Society chapters.

The world's first chapter was created over a decade ago by Sue Ellen Cooper. She was inspired by the poem, and an irreverent and inspired poem it is, "Warning" by Jenny Joseph, and through the gifting of many red hats found a way to celebrate women in the latter part of their life. And I can certainly appreciate, as I think we all do, that issues of gender equality do not divide us, but in fact unite us.

That point was reinforced by Gertrude Mongella from Tanzania as she offered her opening address to the Plenary Session of the

Fourth World Conference on Women sponsored by the United Nations in 1995. She said, and I quote, "It is now the turn of men to join women in their struggle for equality."

As a husband, as a father, as a son, and as all of us in this Assembly, as a citizen, it is my honour to stand in the legislature and recognize the work of the Red Hat Society. The Red Hat Society provides a community, a supportive sisterhood for women across Saskatchewan and well beyond. Together they celebrate life and support each other through its challenges.

In the words of Sue Ellen Cooper:

Women make up more than 50 percent of the population, and regardless of our current age, each of us is growing older every day. Each one of us travels her own path, yet all of us inevitably share so much in the areas of life experiences, personal relationships, and societal roles.

Organizations such as the Red Hat Society are integral to the community spirit we celebrate in Saskatchewan. Next week the Government of Saskatchewan will proclaim Saskatchewan Red Hat Society Day in honour of the organization's anniversary. I ask all members to join me, and most especially the member from Kelvington-Wadena who's a member of this society, to join in welcoming the ladies of the Red Hat Society to their legislature.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I too on behalf of the opposition want to welcome the members from the Red Hat Society, all the women that have come today. From what I know about this group, not only are they very visible because of their hats — and it's unfortunate that the member didn't wear hers; that would have been entertaining — I understand that these women are extremely enthusiastic and they have a lot of fun. That's what I always hear, that you have a lot of fun. Look at all the hats nodding. So I too would like to welcome all the women here today to the legislature.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce others who are in the gallery. On the very top row is Darlene Gray, the director of OCATS, the Ovarian Cancer Awareness and Treatment in Saskatchewan, and Elan Morgan board member. Wave? And sitting beside Elan are Joan and Harvey Schneider, also board members. I just want to say about Joan before I sit down and welcome them, Joan was the executive secretary to the president of SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] when that was me. So I'm very happy to see Joan here today and welcome them all to the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony where we had seniors being able to take next steps in their life, in their career. And one of the people that facilitated this was Sherry Knight, and Sherry Knight is the president of Dimension 11 which is a consulting firm that works with all members of society, doesn't matter their age. But one of the things she has had the

opportunity to do was to help seniors prepare themselves for re-entry into the workforce, and this was a program that was sponsored by both the provincial and federal government. And like I said, I had the wonderful opportunity of meeting different seniors that Sherry and her company had prepared for their next step in their careers. So I would like everyone in the House to welcome Sherry Knight, president of Dimension 11.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an individual seated in the western gallery. I'm referring to one, Brett Angus. If you could give us a wave there, Mr. Angus, or should I say President Angus, Mr. Speaker, because Brett of course is serving as the newly-elected — at our very successful convention up in Prince Albert — as the president of the Aboriginal New Democrats of Saskatchewan.

I know he's a proud, young Métis man. He's working in the city here at one of the city's most popular night spots, and probably why he's here earlier — for the shift, Mr. Speaker. But it's good to see Brett here in his Legislative Assembly. And I'd ask all members to please join me in welcoming Brett Angus to his legislature.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned Saskatchewan citizens who are concerned over the condition of our highways in this great province. This particular petition pertains to Highway 123 which is the highway into Cumberland House.

[13:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, the communities in the North, unlike communities in the South, have only one access in and the same access out, so that is a very important link for them. This particular highway has so many potholes in it that it requires significant manoeuvring just to stay . . . from getting stuck in the mud, so the petition says. So this highway certainly is in dire state of needing of repair. And I'll read the petition, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintaining and repairing of this highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And this particular petition is signed by the good folks of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. I so submit.

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

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today

to present a petition that originated with the Saskatchewan Student Coalition. This petition is in support of the implementation of the Saskatchewan scholarship fund, the same scholarship fund that was promised in the 2007 election platform by the Sask Party. The prayer of this petition, Mr. Speaker, reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from Moose Jaw and Regina. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for protection from unreasonable increases, rent increases for renters. And we know the vast majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines, including Manitoba, BC [British Columbia], Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to consider enacting some form of rent control with a view to protecting Saskatchewan renters from unreasonable increases in rent.

And Mr. Speaker, the petitioners come from the good city of Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition that has been circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition, a petition in support of affordable undergraduate tuition costs and a call on the Sask Party government to have their actions match their rhetoric. And the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to

present a petition in support of the expansion of the graduate retention program. The petition is being circulated because the Saskatchewan Party government amended the retention program specifically to exclude master's, Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] graduates and students who graduated from post-secondary institutions from outside of Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from the city of Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition regarding the Sask Party's lack of action with respect to climate change:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

To cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, acknowledge and recognize that climate change is occurring and the impacts of climate change are escalating and worsening;

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to undertake immediate actions to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, actions which will serve to protect Saskatchewan people from the significant costs to our economy, global security, and the quality of life which climate change threatens to bring about, and to also protect Saskatchewan people from longer and more frequent droughts, reduced river flows as the glaciers which feed our rivers shrink, erratic rainfall with more frequent and serious flooding, and loss of at least the southern part of Saskatchewan's valuable boreal forest which is treasured by so many in our province;

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, begin the process of creating a meaningful, significant, comprehensive, and broad-based strategy including enacting substantial and meaningful legislation and substantial and meaningful regulations, to meet the commitment solemnly pledged repeatedly in October and November of 2007 during the last provincial election by the Premier, the current member from Swift Current, who at the time of the last provincial election when he made this serious and significant commitment was serving as the leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to reduce our province's greenhouse gas emissions by 32 per cent from the levels of greenhouse gas emissions which our province produced in the year 2007 and to meet said 32 per cent

reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by the year of Our Lord 2020, 10 years from now or one short decade away;

And in so doing, to cause the Premier to instruct his Minister of Environment, the current member from Martensville, to recognize the importance of honouring the Premier's solemnly pledged commitment and to set about the important task of developing a substantial and meaningful plan to seek a reduction of our province's levels of greenhouse gas emissions, rather than continuing to evade all responsibility in her duties, to actually address this critically important issue which will directly affect our province's economy and the quality of life for all of our residents;

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, reject the intensity-based reduction targets which the provincial Sask Party government has shamefully followed the federal Conservative government in adopting, in favour of absolute reduction targets, and to immediately enact said absolute reduction targets in the new management and reduction of greenhouse gases Act;

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, reverse its ill-advised decision to cut all funding to the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative and to recognize that the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative is a valuable and much-needed organization in that it generates practical options to help Saskatchewan adapt to current and future impacts of climate change and fosters the development of new professionals in the emerging science of climate change impacts and adaptation;

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, restore the full amount of funding which it recently cut to the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the good residents of La Ronge, Esterhazy, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

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

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

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

The petitions are signed by residents of Regina, Preeceville, Springside, Qu'Appelle, and Moose Jaw. I so present.

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

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

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

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

Today the petition is signed by residents of Saskatoon and Battleford, Saskatchewan. And I so submit.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the two consecutive \$1 billion deficit budgets and the \$1 billion debt growth that's occurring within our province. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned citizens of Humboldt and Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition in support of the Saskatchewan film and television industry. The petition acknowledges this government's failure to address issues critical to the film industry and how it's driving jobs and investment out of the province, particularly with its short-sighted decision to close Saskatchewan Communications Network. The prayer reads as follows:

To cause the provincial government to make changes to the film employment tax credit that will allow the

Saskatchewan film industry to be more competitive with other provinces, to reverse its decision to shut down Saskatchewan Communications Network, and to work with the industry to reverse the decline in film production.

This petition is signed by residents of Saskatoon. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Condolences to Polish People

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sadness that I rise in the Legislative Assembly today to offer condolences to the people of Poland and to people of Polish extraction who live in our province and live, indeed live across our country. A horrific plane crash on Saturday resulted in the death of Poland's President Lech Kaczynski. Tragically, among those killed were Mr. Kaczynski's wife Maria, ministerial staff, 15 members of parliament, the commanders of all branches of the armed services, the central bank president, historians of the Katyn massacre and several bishops and priests.

It is hard to imagine how a nation can cope with such an unexpected and large-scale loss of its leadership and its public servants and its spiritual leaders. However, Mr. Speaker, with Saskatchewan being settled by many Polish migrants over a century ago, we know for so many of our fellow residents that this tragedy hits very close to home.

President Kaczynski left an indelible mark on history. His involvement with the solidarity movement during the 1980s in challenging the Soviet communism is well known, Mr. Speaker. Because he and other Polish people stood up for what they believed in, Poland eventually freed itself from the chains of communism. A week of mourning has been declared throughout Poland, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the members of this Legislative Assembly, I want to extend our condolences to the people of Poland and to the many Polish Canadians who are coping with this loss and this tragedy.

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

Canadian Effort and Sacrifice in War

Mr. Quennell: — On Friday April 9th we commemorated the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge where thousands of Canadian workers and farmers turned soldier, through their efforts and sacrifice, transformed Canada from a political arrangement into a nation. With innovative tactics, determination, and courage, Canadians succeeded where others had failed in the taking of Vimy Ridge, earning Canada its own place at the treaty table at Versailles.

This year we also honoured the passing of the very last of the Canadian veterans of the Great War, the so-called war to end all war. When no one living has a direct experience of that war it will be easier to forget, not the date or the accomplishment, but the reality of the hard sacrifice that made the accomplishment

possible.

The peace brokered at the treaty table at Versailles was an all-too-short one and Canadians, once again and not for the last time, took up a disproportionate share of the burden in the renewed conflict. Canadians continue to face difficult challenges and decisions as to our responsibilities in the world. As we face those challenges and make those decisions, we must strive to ensure that our achievements are worthy of the sacrifices required to obtain them.

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

Remembering Edward Bayda

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week marked the passing of a great man and important member of Saskatchewan's legal community. On Saturday, a state funeral was held for former Chief Justice Edward Bayda. Friends and colleagues joined together to remember his lifetime of achievements. Edward Bayda was the youngest provincial Chief Justice in Canada, the first of Ukrainian descent, the province's first Saskatchewan-born Chief Justice, and the longest serving provincial Chief Justice.

Ed Ratushny, a professor emeritus of the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, and close friend, had this to say about him, "Under his leadership, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal and he, personally, made a great contribution to our constitutional jurisprudence . . ." He went on to say, "He also contributed to public policy through his landmark reports arising out of his royal commissions inquiring into the grain and uranium industries, both so vital to the Saskatchewan and Canadian economies."

Mr. Bayda relished the role that judges play in articulating and shaping the law, but he understood the immediate, often personal impact that judges' decisions have on the lives of ordinary people.

I ask that all members of this House join with me in remembering a man who succeeded in making his province a better place to live and work. Our sympathies go to all of the family members of Justice Bayda's family. We share their sorrow and loss. Former Chief Justice Edward Bayda shall not be forgotten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

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

Holocaust Memorial Day

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, today, April 12th, is Holocaust Memorial Day or Yom HaShoah. In Israel, at 10 a.m. a siren blows and everyone stops what they're doing. They pull over in their cars and stand in remembrance of the 6 million Jews who were killed in the Second World War.

In Saskatoon, Holocaust Memorial Day is going to be celebrated on April 18th. Regine Frankel will be the guest

speaker. Ms. Frankel was born in France in 1930 and, with her whole family, was hidden during the war.

Mr. Speaker, I have walked through Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam where Anne and her family were also hidden during the war. I stood where she stood, looking out a window while her diary was being read aloud behind me. The powerful message in remembering the Holocaust and memorializing the tragedy of 6 million Jews being killed is that we never let this horror become ancient history. To the survivors and their families it remains real and ever-present.

To all of us, we must remember so that it does not happen again. We must all be witnesses to carry on the memory of the Holocaust. To quote historian Jennifer Rosenberg, "We fight against ignorance with education and against disbelief with proof."

Today, Mr. Speaker, we join with the world on Holocaust Memorial Day to say that we too will not forget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

93rd Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 9th will live on forever in Canadian history. This year marks the 93rd anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

This confrontation was the first time all four divisions of the Canadian corps went into battle together. The battle has become a national symbol of sacrifice and bravery, and it truly stands as a timeless memorial to the strength of the Canadian nation.

Over 97,000 Canadian soldiers formed that core of a fighting force that launched that assault. Four battalions that were engaged in that battle hailed from Saskatchewan. The action of these soldiers defined the character of Canada and brought this nation out from under the shadow of the British Empire, allowing its citizens to forge their own image.

As our sons and daughters are currently serving in many capacities around the world in both peacekeeping operations and in the NATO-led [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] mission in Afghanistan, it is crucial that we note that they are just the latest to wear the uniform of the Canadian Forces. They are writing the newest chapter in the history of our armed forces, and what a proud history it is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Granting of Pardons

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the recent news about the pardon granted to Graham James has left Canadians concerned about our nation's system of keeping track of criminal records and worried about why dangerous criminals are being pardoned.

As the James case shows, Mr. Speaker, the National Parole Board does not grant pardons based on the special merits of those applying. Rather, for many years pardons have been granted as a matter of routine to almost anyone who applies,

provided they can show that they have not run afoul of the law for a period of several years following their release from custody, regardless of the violent or harmful nature of their crime. Even sex offenders, gang leaders, and drug leaders can be pardoned, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government introduced changes to the *Criminal Records Act* aimed at ensuring the granting of pardons did not result in vulnerable Canadians being put at risk.

Unfortunately the James case shows us that sometimes criminals are granted routine pardons even when they have committed very serious crimes like trafficking drugs, perpetrating sex crimes, or procuring sexual favours. Violent behaviour like this could put vulnerable people at risk, especially if these offenders go to work in the public sector or to serve in public office.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has said the case of Graham James will cause it to review how pardons for serious criminals are issued in Canada. It is our hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Saskatchewan will fully co-operate with this review.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Strong Economic Recovery

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can hardly believe it myself, Mr. Speaker, but once again there is more good news about our wonderful province. There are more glowing reports released last week about the strong economic recovery happening right here in Saskatchewan.

A new Conference Board of Canada report indicates that economies in both Saskatoon and Regina are growing in 2010. Saskatoon will increase by 2.8 per cent and Regina by 2 per cent. The Conference Board report suggests, and I quote, “A strengthening provincial economy will lift employment by 5,000 jobs in 2010 and another 7,000 in 2011.”

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business today said business optimism in Saskatchewan hit a two-year high in March and now leads all Canadian provinces. Consumer confidence in the provincial economy continues to grow. More and more individuals and families are choosing to plant their roots in our province. Urban housing start-ups are up by 176 per cent in the first three months of 2010.

Mr. Speaker, these good news reports help to show the rest of Canada and beyond what everyone that lives here already knew. Our province is becoming a leader in confederation. Our government will continue to work hard to ensure that all people in Saskatchewan have opportunities to succeed. Our government will continue to move forward, and reports like these signal that we are on the right track. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Personal Health Information

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health, and it deals with a number of polls that came out over the weekend. One of them shows that 92 per cent of the public don't agree with the releasing of names and addresses of hospital patients. In this particular poll, the question asked was, should the names and addresses of hospital patients be released and used for fundraising? Yes, 4 per cent; no, 92 per cent; and no opinion, 4 per cent.

In light of the concern and outrage that has been expressed by Saskatchewan residents and by the Privacy Commissioner, will the minister today admit a bad decision and reverse his decision to release that information?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be able to rise today and clarify some of the misinformation that's certainly has been let out regarding the regulation change that our government has seen.

What I want to say is that the protection of personal health information, the privacy of personal health information is paramount to our government. Mr. Speaker, we are combining that with the absolutely amazing work that foundations have done across this province, both in urban and rural. Mr. Speaker, they've done absolutely great work and they truly do, I believe, have the full confidence of the general public.

Mr. Speaker, this regulation allows health regions to enter into agreement with foundations if they so choose. There'll be health regions that don't. Some will enter into agreements with foundations to provide only a name and an address for the auspices of the health region to pursue some fundraising opportunities, Mr. Speaker. That's all it is. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, to the minister, the Privacy Commissioner has been pretty clear on this issue and I quote where he says, “It's a bad idea.” The Privacy Commissioner also says, and I quote, “Information provided so we can be diagnosed and treated shouldn't be shared with any other party without the consent of the patient.” This obviously violates that.

Can the minister tell the Assembly and the people of the province what consultation went on with people of the province or in fact with the Privacy Commissioner before this wrong-minded decision was made? What consultation . . . [inaudible].

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very, very important, Mr. Speaker, that the general public knows that at many opportunities throughout the process they can opt out. They can have their names taken off, Mr. Speaker. While they're in the hospital, for a couple months after they've been in the hospital, after receiving the first letter — they can opt out at any time, Mr. Speaker. That is in place.

But it's important also to know, Mr. Speaker, that the Privacy Commissioner was consulted formally four different times on this very regulation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and yes, we know his opinions on this regulation as did the former government know his opinions as they worked through this regulation over the last four years of their mandate.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the obvious question to the minister is: what did the Privacy Commissioner say and what advice did he give to the minister?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the information that will be passed out, if health regions so choose to enter into an agreement with the foundation . . . the information of a name and address had been passed out for decades, Mr. Speaker, decades under the previous government.

It was only since 2002 where HIPA [*The Health Information Protection Act* (2004)] was put in place, Mr. Speaker, and I do believe that there was some unintended consequences of HIPA, Mr. Speaker, and this was being one of them. We're changing that, Mr. Speaker, to allow the exchange of a name and address — only a name and an address — once a formal agreement has been struck with health region and . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I ask the members to allow the Minister of Health to complete his response.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, only once a formal agreement has been put in place . . . Now this isn't going to happen for a month or two months or three months. We've already talked to the health regions and foundations. Whether it's Judy Davis here in Regina, whether it's Maura Davies in Saskatoon through the health region, they all realize what is paramount is privacy, Mr. Speaker, health information privacy. That will be respected to the utmost degree.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, the poll that was done over the weekend or the polls that were done, they ask the question: should the names and addresses of the hospital patients be released? That's it. And the answer that people give, 92 per cent, is no.

My question to the minister is the following. Isn't this arrangement to allow for letters of . . . beg letters to go out to ask patients for money, people who have already suffered enough, isn't it just the result of the cuts to health care that have occurred in the last budget — 135 million to capital health facilities and equipment? Isn't that the real reason that we're into this mess we're now in?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, there is an increase in health funding by this government to record levels, record

levels that this province has never seen before, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, a record level of health care spending. Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said from the outset, if people want to opt out, they certainly have that option.

If you look at what other provinces have done, this is no different than what's being done in Ontario and New Brunswick and a couple other provinces, Mr. Speaker. This is the same process that will be done. Personal health information will be paramount to be protected. Name and address, if the health region so chooses, can be then transferred to a health foundation and, Mr. Speaker, a letter can go out. If the person chooses to opt out at any time, the person is more than capable and will be informed of that choice.

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

Gynecologic Oncologists

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, for two years the minister has ignored the pleas of women with ovarian cancer and gyne-oncologists to address substandard working conditions in southern Saskatchewan. As a result, Dr. Brydon, one of only two gyne-oncologists practising in southern Saskatchewan, has closed her practice because she is burned out. To quote Dr. Brydon, "Physically and emotionally, I can't cope any more."

Mr. Speaker, the minister's incompetence and failure to address the substandard working conditions of gyne-oncologists in Regina is putting at risk the lives of women with ovarian cancer. Why?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, we want to thank Dr. Brydon for all the work that she has done in southern Saskatchewan. These people are very specialized doctors. They are, Mr. Speaker, gynecology oncologists, which is a very specialized area. We have had four in our province, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Brydon is closing her practice to move on to other options. The health region, the health region as well as the government, is working hard to ensure that that position will be filled, Mr. Speaker.

But what I will say is that in the last two and a half years of our government, we have done more to recruit physicians into this province compared to the 16 years. And especially when you look at the front page of the *Leader-Post*, from 2001 to 2006 the net out-migration of health care workers in Saskatchewan was 1,160 health care workers out, Mr. Speaker. In our first two and a half years, we have attracted 164 more physicians to our province than under that government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, that tired rhetoric is no consolation to women who have ovarian cancer. Mr. Speaker, in every other jurisdiction, including Saskatoon, gyne-oncologists work in a hospital setting with the proper support around them — not so in Regina where the specialists have to find their own office

space and work without the support of a nurse.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is he going to provide immediate office space and examining room space in the Regina General Hospital along with the proper nursing support, or is he going to continue to ignore the issue until the second gyne-oncologist closes her practice?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we have a gynecological oncology program working group that was established, Mr. Speaker, under our government. This working group has patient support, is represented through patient support groups. It also has a gynecology oncologist, the four that were in the province, working on this group as well as the health authorities of Regina Qu'Appelle, Saskatoon, and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to deal with this issue to have an ongoing program.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry officials have informed me that progress is being steadily made, Mr. Speaker. And yes, there are going to be decisions made by physicians to step aside. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going in the right direction. It isn't the working of that group . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd ask the opposition members to give the minister the same opportunity to respond as the government gave the member to ask the question. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it isn't the working of that group that would get into the micromanagement of what happens within a health region or the Cancer Agency. That is the auspices of the Cancer Agency or the regional health authority in their particular area, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a lack of leadership. The working group has been ongoing for over two years. They're going to just keep spinning their wheels unless the minister says, do this. The minister's incompetence and failure to address the problems means there's now only one gyne-oncologist looking after all of southern Saskatchewan women. This will put additional pressures on the remaining gyne-oncologist and potentially will increase the wait time for women who are waiting for even an initial diagnosis.

My question to the minister is this: will the Sask Party government be forced to send women out of the province for diagnosis and treatment because of their incompetence and failure?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — As I had mentioned earlier that the health region, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region will be working hard in the next . . .

in the past but as we move forward over the next month or so to attract another gyne-oncologist into the province. I am very proud of our government having set up a physician recruitment agency that will deal with this very issue, these very issues, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately that hadn't been done for many, many years — never even contemplated under the former government when we saw hundreds and hundreds of doctors leaving this province, Mr. Speaker. In the last two and a half years, we've seen more doctors come to the province than leave — an increase of about 164. There is more work to do. That's why we set up a recruitment agency, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we've also increased the number of training seats in the College of Medicine and the number of residency positions, up to 108 residency positions in the province, Mr. Speaker, that will bode this province very well into the future.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, ducking and weaving, I mean there is no answer in the minister's rhetoric. And Dr. Brydon's leaving her practice now because the province will not set up a gyne-cancer unit in Regina. This unit would allow women to be diagnosed, treated, and receive follow-up care in one place. To quote Dr. Brydon:

I actually don't think that the way the system is structured in this province at this time allows anybody to do the job that needs to be done properly and that is because we do not have a gynecologic women's cancer unit the way all other provinces do.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is the minister going to establish a gyne women's cancer unit in the province now, or is he going to wait and wait and wait, and talk and talk, and talk and continue to risk the lives of women with ovarian cancer?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we know and understand the very importance of this issue, Mr. Speaker. That's why we set up a working group that has patient representative groups on it, that has the oncologists on it, that has the Cancer Agency, that has the health regions, to look at how to best manage this project, Mr. Speaker. There has been progress made, absolutely. But it's interesting that they would stand and criticize the way the program and the way the health system is being run, when they have been in government for 16 years prior, setting up the very program they're criticizing now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking at how we can improve this program as we move forward. We're looking at how we can have the proper complement of gyne-oncologists within the province, Mr. Speaker, because we know that it is a very important issue, and we're working to improve the health of women in our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dutch Elm Disease

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are outraged at the Sask Party government for its short-sighted decision to axe funding for the Dutch elm disease program. To the minister: why did she make this short-sighted decision?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously during this budget process, there were some difficult decisions to be made as far as the Dutch elm disease program goes. The municipalities have the capacity for the trees that are under their jurisdiction in their areas. And, Mr. Speaker, the province will continue monitoring for Dutch elm disease in the buffer zones surrounding those communities.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, when asked why she cut the \$500,000 from the Dutch elm disease program, the minister said, "... there were some tough decisions to make in this budget. But we felt there was knowledge and capacity within the municipalities."

Mr. Speaker, Dutch elm disease has been confirmed in at least 25 communities in Saskatchewan, and there will still be a legal obligation to remove the trees on the part of the property owners. Did the minister consult with these 25 communities before she off-loaded new costs onto them and onto Saskatchewan property owners?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, municipalities have the capacity internally to monitor the elm trees in their jurisdictions. And, Mr. Speaker, Ray Morgan, the city of Regina manager for forestry said, and I quote, "We are not concerned about our program." Mr. Speaker, they know what their capacity is. As I said, the province will continue to monitor the buffer zones around those communities. And the Ministry of Environment will continue to provide technical and scientific support.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, there's another quote from Ray Morgan as well, and that is that there will be long-term, significant financial implications. Perhaps the minister would like to heed those words as well.

Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to off-load its responsibilities onto property owners and municipalities. But that certainly won't work on lands that the government controls, such as provincial parks. To the minister, how does she plan to meet her obligations to control Dutch elm disease on provincial lands without this program?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the

Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Environment has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Tourism and Parks that the monitoring will be done through parks on park land for trees that are on that park land, Mr. Speaker. And we trust the Ministry of Tourism and Parks to follow through on their obligations.

But, Mr. Speaker, as far as downloading goes, it's the NDP [New Democratic Party] who continually pulled back money from municipalities. Mr. Speaker, municipalities have revenue sharing at unprecedented levels under this government. We are supporting municipalities.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, that lack of control on provincial lands will exacerbate the problem in cities. The provincial program created a buffer zone around the cities. And without that buffer zone, officials are predicting a full-blown crisis. A *Star Phoenix* editorial describes the Sask Party's decision to cut the program as "... another example that it didn't make the hard decisions in trimming its budget. It made short-sighted decisions that ... could prove ... costly." It "shows neither foresight nor courage."

To the minister: why should municipalities, property owners, and our environment have to pay the price for this minister's lack of foresight and this government's incompetence?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Apparently the member opposite hasn't been listening to my answers. The Ministry of Environment has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Tourism and Parks. They will be doing the monitoring within provincial parks, Mr. Speaker. And as far as a buffer zone goes, I've said twice already during this question period that the Ministry of Environment will continue to do monitoring in the buffer zones around municipalities such as Regina.

And, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities, we feel, have the capacity to deal with this issue. And, Mr. Speaker, in the circumstance of Regina, it was the NDP who clawed back \$120 million in revenue sharing for the city of Regina alone. Mr. Speaker, we have increased revenue sharing to the municipalities.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the \$22,500 that came from this program for the city of Regina had huge efficiencies built into it, Mr. Speaker, because the buffer zone was protected around the city of Regina, and therefore there wasn't the creep-in to the city in terms of the city having to deal with those elm trees.

There are 60,000 American elm trees in the city of Regina that need to be protected, Mr. Speaker, and yet, and yet what I'm finding out is that I can't find anybody who is actually consulted. The experts that are dealing with this were not

consulted prior to hearing it in the budget. I'd like to ask the minister this: who did the minister consult with respect to cutting this program of \$500,000 when it is so valuable to the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, again to clarify for the member opposite, the buffer zones around municipalities will continue to be monitored by the Ministry of Environment. That has not ended. I don't know how much more clearly I can say that, Mr. Speaker.

And the municipalities have the capacity to take on this challenge. Ray Morgan of the city of Regina, said, and I quote, "It's a challenge to keep the trees growing in Regina . . . If we have to spend \$50,000 extra dollars to help prevent it on our own budget, it's a worthwhile investment." Mr. Speaker, the city of Regina is in a better position financially under this government than it ever was under that government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, given that there is so much outcry from the province of Saskatchewan, the people in Saskatchewan, with respect to this ill-fated decision for such a highly efficient amount of money that that \$500,000 was, will this minister now admit that she made a mistake in cutting the Dutch elm disease program and reinstate the funding to ensure that the American elm trees in Saskatchewan are well protected?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her question. As I said, the Ministry of Environment will continue with the monitoring around the buffer zones. Municipalities will be responsible for the trees that they own within their own municipalities. And, Mr. Speaker, they also have unprecedented revenue sharing under this government, Mr. Speaker. We feel that they have the capacity to take on this program, and, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Environment will continue to provide technical and scientific support for those municipalities who need assistance.

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

Finance and Electoral Issues

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Does the Premier consider the Saskatchewan Party to be the Saskatchewan conservative party?

The Speaker: — Order, order. I want to remind the members that the questions should relate to ministerial duties or responsibilities. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, once again to the Minister of

Justice: if the Premier's party is not the Saskatchewan conservative party — and of course it is not — why are members of his party taking funds belonging to the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — Again I remind the member the question should be directed to the ministerial responsibility of members. If ministers want to respond, we'll let them respond. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, does the Premier consider it appropriate for the Saskatchewan Party to deny the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan its money in order to prevent its participation in provincial elections?

The Speaker: — Again I must remind the member of the rules that the questions are to be related to the ministerial responsibility of the ministry. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, once again my question is to the Minister of Justice. The Premier has a pattern of taking things that don't belong to him. Will the Premier return the \$3 million, which was taken by the Sask Party, to the Progressive Conservative Party?

The Speaker: — I again remind the member under rule 19(2) that questions should be directly related to ministerial responsibility. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again my question is for the Minister of Justice. Does the Premier believe taking money belonging to another political party is legal?

The Speaker: — I remind the member again from Regina Dewdney of rule 19(2) that questions are directly related to ministerial responsibility. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, once again my question is to the Minister of Justice. Does the Premier believe that the money should be returned to the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan?

[14:30]

The Speaker: — I again remind the member that the questions should be related to ministerial responsibility. And if the questions are not related to ministerial responsibility, then we will move to the next question. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, my question to the Justice Minister is this: does the Premier believe that the money that was put aside in a trust fund by the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan should be immediately returned to the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — Again, again I bring to the attention of the member from Regina Dewdney, the question does not relate directly to the ministerial responsibility of the Minister of Justice. Next question. The member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister of Justice is: in a fair and unbiased electoral process, should all political parties have the right to run candidates and use the funds raised by them in a fair and impartial electoral process?

The Speaker: — I remind the member of the rule, and ministers if they so wish may respond.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to present its ninth report. I move:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd ask the government members to come to order, so we can proceed. The Chair of the standing committee on Crown corporations and central agencies has moved:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 133, *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2009* with amendment.

The Speaker: — The Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services has moved that Bill No. 133, *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2009* . . . report the Bill with amendment. When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill and its amendments be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 133, *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2009* with amendment and that the Bill and its amendments be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — When shall the amendments be read the first time? I recognize the minister.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

Bill No. 133 — *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2009*

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

The Speaker: — It's been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First and second reading of the amendments.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to third reading. I recognize the Minister of Health.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 133 — *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2009*

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 133, *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2009* with amendment be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Letters of Retirement

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I wish to inform the Legislative Assembly of letters of retirement received in my office. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Mr. G.L. Gerrand, has announced his retirement to take effect April 24th, 2010. And the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Fred Wendel, has announced his retirement effective April 30th, 2010. I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Before orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, with leave to move a motion regarding substitutions to standing committees.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved for leave to move a motion regarding committees. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Substitutions on Committee

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That the names of Dan D'Autremont and Jeremy Harrison be substituted for the names of Rod Gantfoer and Delbert Kirsch on the Standing Committee on House Services.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I ask the members to come to order so we can move forward with the motion. The Government House Leader has moved:

That the names of Dan D'Autremont and Jeremy Harrison be substituted for the names of Rod Gantfoer and Delbert Kirsch on the Standing Committee on House Services.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, with leave to move a motion regarding the construction of the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee, to move Corrections and Public Safety from Human Services to Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Government House Services.

Changes to Rule 142

Mr. D'Autremont: —

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by deleting rule 142(c) and (d) and substituting the following in its place:

(c) *Standing Committee on Human Services* — portfolio to relate to the areas of health, social services, education,

and labour; and

(d) *Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice* — portfolio to relate to the areas of justice, corrections, policing, municipal, intergovernmental, interprovincial, First Nations and Métis and northern affairs; and tourism, parks, culture, and sport.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved:

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by deleting rule 142(c) and (d) and substitute the following in its place:

(c) *Standing Committee on Human Services* — portfolio to relate to the areas of health, social services, education, and labour; and

(d) *Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice* — portfolio to relate to the areas of justice, corrections, policing, municipal, intergovernmental, interprovincial, First Nations and Métis and northern affairs; and tourism, parks, culture, and sport.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave to make a motion of substitution on committees as well.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has asked for leave to make a motion of substitution on committees. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Substitutions on Committee

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move:

That the name of Warren McCall be substituted for the name of Trent Wotherspoon on the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has moved:

That the name of Warren McCall be substituted for the name of Trent Wotherspoon on the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. Why is the Leader of the Opposition on his feet?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, to move a motion under rule 59.

The Speaker: — I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to briefly state the reasons for the motion requesting leave.

MOTION UNDER RULE 59

Condolences to Polish People

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, maybe the easiest way would be to read the motion and then just give a couple of words, but the motion would read:

That this Assembly extend our condolences to the people of Poland on the tragic death of President Lech Kaczynski and his wife Maria and 94 others including many distinguished public servants, among them the army chief of staff, the national bank president, deputy foreign minister, army chaplain, head of the national security office, deputy parliament Speaker, and civil rights commissioner; and further

That this Assembly extend our condolences to all the people of Polish ancestry throughout Saskatchewan and Canada during this difficult time.

That is the motion that I would move if I receive leave. I think it's self-explanatory and would support the Premier's private member statement that he did earlier today. But we would then have the opportunity as members of the Assembly to send something forward both to the community in Poland, but also to the many communities in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — The Opposition Leader has asked for leave to move a motion under rule 59 regarding condolences. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, first of all let me thank the members of the government benches for agreeing. And I promise that I won't take very long because I know we have many other issues that we need to deal with today. And I believe that I will be the only speaker from this side of the Assembly, and I want to say to the Deputy Premier that I appreciate very much the opportunity to say a few words.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 10th tragedy struck the country of Poland. A devastating plane crash killed 96 people, people of Polish citizenry. The president, his wife Maria, and 94 others were killed when the plane they were travelling in crashed in a forest while they were landing or attempting to land near the city of Smolensk in eastern Russia. A devastating loss such as this, taking the lives of so many senior officials, is unprecedented in our modern age.

Among the victims were the army chief of staff, a national bank

president, a deputy foreign minister, army chaplain, the head of the national security office, deputy parliament speaker, civil rights commissioner, and at least two presidential aides, and three other lawmakers. Mr. Speaker, this kind of devastation to any organization, whether it is government or private sector corporation, strikes a blow at the heart of this country. And I know all Canadians and all citizens join with us in our condolences to the 96 killed.

The effects are being felt right here in Canada and indeed here in Saskatchewan. We have a large Polish population here in the province and our heart goes out to all of them who are affected directly or indirectly. Thousands are gathering to commemorate those who've fallen in this disaster and to send signals of support to their comrades, friends, and families in Poland. Our Lady of Czestochowa, the church on 20th Street West in the constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale, is a hub of the city's Polish community. And I know that our members will want to reach out and support that community in this time of grief.

People have placed candles and flowers on a statue at the church and are signing a book of condolences to send to the Polish embassy in Ottawa. As one of the parishioners of that community who came from Poland in 1984 said, and I quote:

The reaction has been overwhelming. People are shocked, speechless, stunned, just united in grief . . .

We love Canada dearly, but we never realized how Polish we are at heart.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that all of us know that feeling, and we extend our condolences. During this difficult time, I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join with me in wishing strength and faith to the people of Poland and their descendents here in Saskatchewan and others across Canada. And through adversity, may courage prevail.

And, Mr. Speaker, with those short words, I know that other members will want to join with me in this motion in voting for it. And I move:

That this Assembly extend our condolences to the people of Poland on the tragic death of President Lech Kaczynski and his wife Maria and 94 others including many distinguished public servants, among them the army chief of staff, the national bank president, deputy foreign minister, army chaplain, head of the national security office, deputy parliament speaker, and civil rights commissioner; and further

That this Assembly extend our condolences to all people of Polish ancestry throughout Saskatchewan and Canada during this difficult time.

I so move.

[14:45]

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is a motion by the Leader of the Opposition:

That this Assembly extend our condolences to the people

of Poland on the tragic death of their president, Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria and 94 others including many distinguished public servants, among them the army chief of staff, national bank president, deputy foreign minister, army chaplain, head of the national security office, deputy parliamentary Speaker, and civil rights commissioner; and further

That this Assembly extends our condolences to all people of Polish ancestry throughout Saskatchewan and Canada during this difficult time.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And though we hadn't had a chance to talk about this earlier today, I welcome the motion by the Leader of the Opposition and by members opposite. This House will know that during member statements I had the chance to express a few, even if only brief, expressions of sympathy and concern for the nation of Poland, but also for the many Canadians of Polish descent and Polish extraction, and also for the many Saskatchewan residents who trace their heritage as well to that country.

Mr. Speaker, as one considers the scale of this tragedy and the loss of so many members of the government, the loss of a president who had a history of reform, who had a history of being on the side of the Polish people — sometimes against some pretty significant odds, sometimes against the odds that would have seemed insurmountable to people like the former president, the late president now, Kaczynski and others that worked with him side by side like Lech Walesa — we can understand why that country is feeling the loss that they would be feeling today.

Were it only the president, were it only the president, the loss would be enormous. But consider the fact that, as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, that this plane crash took the lives of many, many ministerial staff, high officials in the Government of Poland and 15 members of the parliament and the commanders of all the branches, all of the branches of the armed service and the central bank president and historians of the Katyn massacre.

We can consider, Mr. Speaker, that the loss that must be being felt across that country today would be unspeakable. And so it will be hard for members to try to inadequately pay tribute or homage or even offer our condolences to the people of Poland and to others who feel the loss very directly because of the scale of the loss. I understand that, we understand our information today that perhaps one of the members of parliament was even, was an opposition leader or a potential future candidate for the presidency of Poland.

Mr. Speaker, we note today that President Kaczynski left an indelible mark on history, not just of his country, but he left an indelible mark on the current history of our world — history that was marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, an era that was marked by a birth of freedom in Poland through the Solidarity movement.

In the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, some women and men of uncommon courage challenged that regime, a Soviet-controlled regime in

that country. And they did so, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, with uncommon courage to make that stand. The president that we mark today, former and late President Kaczynski, was part of that group. He was counted in that number of patriots of his country who stood for his country and stood for a new birth of freedom in Poland.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would expect what is happening today in Poland and what is happening for the people of Polish descent in our great province and for the people of Polish descent across the country, I'm sure they're taking an inventory of that loss of, yes, the late President, but of all of these other leaders in their country.

We each in this House know of someone of Polish extraction or descent, families from right here in our province of Saskatchewan who trace their roots back to those people who actually built this province in the first place, who came for their own new birth of freedom from faraway places, from Poland specifically, and carved out a way of life for them and now for us out of dirt and rock and sand and bush, and now, obviously generations later, still have an affinity and an attraction to their homeland, to their heritage, to their culture, to the Polish experience.

And so, Mr. Speaker, may I just say on behalf of the members of the government side of the House — and I know it was already articulated by the Leader of the Opposition, members on the opposition side of the House — let me just say that we again, as I tried to do inadequately in members' statements, we extend our sympathies in our thoughts to the people of Poland. And we extend our thoughts as well to the people in our province who are proud of their Polish extraction, all the people of the country who also share in that Polish ethnicity. We offer them our very, very best today on such a remarkably tragic day as this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege, not because in any way of the nature of the topic, but a privilege to be able to stand, Mr. Speaker, and add a few comments on this motion, a motion that allows this Assembly to speak collectively about the sorrow we feel for the great loss that the people of Poland have experienced.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Premier have stated, Saskatchewan has many proud roots to Poland. Many people who came and settled this country, settled this province and made Saskatchewan the great place it is today, come from Poland. I know over the weekend through chatting with people and through Facebook, many people are truly sad to the very core of their being about the loss of such a great number of leaders for their country.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker. I was communicating with a friend who is Polish and lives in Poland. And she didn't necessarily, what she expressed to me was that she did not share the political beliefs necessarily of the president and many of the individuals there, but she was very clear that that did not matter. What mattered was this was such a large number of people that were so central to everything going on in Poland, and it raises

the real challenge right now for the people in Poland by having such a vacuum.

And I think in this, I assume we'll all agree to support this motion, Mr. Speaker. I think we should also at the same time keep in our thoughts and prayers the country of Poland, not only for the loss that they are experiencing because of so many people dying in such a tragic way, but also our thoughts for the next steps, Mr. Speaker, because with the loss of so many people, it'll be necessary for new leaders to come forward and show the type of leadership and characteristics that are required in times of trouble, Mr. Speaker.

So it's an honour to be able to add my support to this motion, and my thoughts and prayers go out to everyone in Poland and those in Saskatchewan who have ties to Poland. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to put some remarks on the record regarding this tragedy in Poland. Mr. Speaker, the community that I grew up in has many immigrants that came from Poland, the very common names of Yaworski and Paslowski, and many of those people are no doubt today feeling the pain that anyone would feel when you have a loss of people that are direct descendants probably of some relatives.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the members have very, very eloquently stated the tragedy, the circumstances regarding the tragedy, and the fact that we as well in a democratic society grieve for those individuals, for those families that are left, for those people that are still there to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that happened just a very short time ago — March the 2nd in fact — I had the opportunity to meet with the consul general of Poland who was here. And, Mr. Speaker, I understand that you met with him as well, Marek Ciesielczuk. Now Marek, this was his first visit to Saskatchewan and he was very proud, he was very proud of the things that had happened in Poland regarding moving Poland forward, one of the leaders in the European Union. And he talked about the potential, the potential of Poland and the fact that he saw things happening in Poland that he was very proud of. And he was recognizing the leadership of many, not just President Kaczynski, but others.

I also had the opportunity to meet with a senior trade commissioner from Poland who's based in Montreal, Wlodzimierz Leszczynski. And Mr. Leszczynski also indicated how there was an opportunity for Saskatchewan and Poland to continue to grow, continue to grow, and not only for the fact that immigrants from Poland had helped build our province. And we know that there are many communities where the number of immigrants who came from Poland in the early part of the 1900s have in fact contributed a great deal.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of . . . I know many, many residents in the Canora-Pelly constituency and across Saskatchewan who are of Polish descent. We of course extend our condolences to all of those people in Poland who right now are dealing with a tragedy that is of such proportion that I think most of us cannot fathom what that really means. So I extend my condolences to

those people as well.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to add a few remarks. It was an interesting weekend as we all had this unfold. And it was interesting from our own family's perspective as my brother was in Poland this weekend actually. He was visiting Poland.

Some of you know he works for a mining company in the province and was visiting a foundry in Poland but stopped by my uncle's graveyard. My uncle was buried in Poland from World War II, flying aid into Poland after doing the things that soldiers do.

But I just wanted to put this on record, that many of us, whether of Polish descent or not of Polish descent, we feel very strongly about when we see this kind of thing happening that we should rally together and support each other in these times of loss.

We were as a family very proud because my uncle was awarded a medal from Poland for doing that kind of thing, flying aid into Poland during World War II. And so we were proud of being recognized by the Government of Poland, and we just want to say back to the people of Poland that we feel the pain they're in today. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the one presented by the Leader of the Opposition:

That this Assembly extend our condolences to the people of Poland on the tragic death of their president, Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria and 94 others including many distinguished public servants, among them the army chief of staff, national bank president, deputy foreign minister, army chaplain, head of the national security office, deputy parliament Speaker, and civil rights commissioner; and further

That this Assembly extend our condolences to all the people of Polish ancestry throughout Saskatchewan and Canada during this difficult time.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

[15:00]

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move:

That the resolution just adopted, along with the oral

tributes, be transmitted by Mr. Speaker to the ambassador of Poland to Canada and forwarded to the people of Poland.

I so move.

The Speaker: — This motion would have to be moved by leave. Would leave be granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Moved by the Government House Leader:

That the resolution just adopted, along with the oral tributes, be transmitted by Mr. Speaker to the ambassador of Poland and forwarded to the people of Poland.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 1202 through 1217.

The Speaker: — Questions 1202 through 1217 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order the answers to questions 1218 through 1225.

The Speaker: — Questions 1218 through 1225 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 1226 through 1234.

The Speaker: — Questions 1226 through 1234 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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 Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to join into the discussion on Bill No. 108, *An Act to amend The Cities Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Land Surveys Act, 2000*, Mr. Speaker.

So in dealing with legislation, Mr. Speaker, especially legislation around cities, it's always of course important to get it right. It's important that the amendments that are put forward, looking at a particular piece of legislation, speak to needs in the community, speak to the changes that individuals in the communities being affected want, changes that they think are important, and changes that they think will make the situation better as opposed to worse.

When looking at cities, Mr. Speaker, as you know, my constituency, Massey Place, is in Saskatoon. So as a member representing a portion of one of the great cities in our province, I of course have a special interest in hoping that this legislation hits the mark and the types of changes that are in this legislation are in fact what people are interested in and what people want.

So, Mr. Speaker, having had a chance to go through Bill No. 108, *An Act to amend The Cities Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Land Surveys Act, 2000*, I appreciated the opportunity to read some of the introductory remarks made by the minister on November 16th, 2009, when he introduced this Bill to the legislature and made a few comments. And in listening to his comments, Mr. Speaker, he identified a number of areas that will be affected by the proposed changes through these amendments. The one area, Mr. Speaker, that he mentioned was that this Bill — this is a quote from the minister — that “this Bill proposes to enhance city authority by reducing provincial oversight of city street sales, leases, and closures, and improving the tools available to a city to collect and enforce property taxes on mobile homes and house trailers,” Mr. Speaker.

So on that first point that's been identified, it's changes, Mr. Speaker, that are being brought forward in this amendment that affects the relationship between the province and the relationship with municipalities as it relates to city street sales, leases, and closures. In the comments, there was reference, Mr. Speaker, that there was overlapping jurisdiction where it wasn't necessarily clear who in fact was responsible for the one particular area. So in instances like that, Mr. Speaker — if the minister's characterization of the situation is accurate and reflects the situation on the ground in our municipalities, if that is in fact what is wanted and desired — then that type of change that makes the jurisdictional boundaries and responsibilities more clear is likely a good thing.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would have a word of caution on that issue. We've seen in many instances, Mr. Speaker, when there has been a relationship between the provincial government and a municipal government or a regional health board or a school board, we see a number of troubling instances in the last couple of years, and especially in the last couple of months and especially in the last budget, we've seen instances when responsibilities have been off-loaded from the province to other levels of government or other levels of authority. And I know

that that is a concern for many groups.

So it would be my hope that in this situation, when dealing with streets and roadways, that type of thing, where there is a more clear explanation in terms of who's responsible for what and how something gets done, then that would be a good thing. But I worry, Mr. Speaker, if the off-loading of responsibility from the provincial government to another level of government or an authority, I'm worried that if that offloading is one that places a greater burden on the other level of government or other authority, then that's a problem.

We can think of some examples, Mr. Speaker, in the recent budget on health care for example, with cuts being made, the budget not clearly stating what funding is required for the settlement of health care workers, and that is in turn a burden that will have to be assumed by the health regions, many health regions, Mr. Speaker, that are already running a deficit.

So in that situation where we saw a change of responsibility, we saw an off-loading from one level to another. I would suggest that it will be detrimental to that other level and, Mr. Speaker, that that off-loading is in fact a way for the provincial government to make its own balance sheet, supposed balance sheet, look better, have less red on it, Mr. Speaker.

So it's my hope that on this issue here with Bill No. 108, as changes are made with respect to jurisdiction on things like roadways between the provincial government and municipalities, I hope, Mr. Speaker, that it's not a similar situation as we've seen in health care where the government is off-loading responsibility, their own responsibility, off-loading their own requirement to be funding health care properly. I hope that same experience, Mr. Speaker, is not happening on the front of municipalities with respect to roadways.

There are other examples as well, Mr. Speaker, when off-loading by this government has not been done in a way that is actually helpful to the other level of government or other authority. We saw another example in the recent budget on the issue of funding for teachers' salaries in upcoming negotiations where that money is not clearly stated in the budget, and the burden will be placed on school boards to pick up the difference.

And so we have another example, Mr. Speaker, where the government says one thing, says that they're about more clearly explaining the roles of one level of government to another level of government or to another authority. But when you look at the fine print, when you look at the details, it's actually an off-loading of burden simply to make themselves look better as opposed to dealing with the issues at hand.

So it's my genuine hope that in the minister's explanation, when he said that this Bill proposes to enhance city authority by reducing provincial oversight of city street sales, leases, and closures, and improving the tools available to a city to collect and enforce property taxes on mobile homes and house trailers . . . So the first issue, Mr. Speaker, was about the off-loading of the responsibility. And it's my hope that that's done in a way that does in fact make life better, make life easier for individuals in our municipalities, for the administrators, for the elected officials in our municipalities working. I hope this

change does do that and does not place a greater burden on them, greater expectations on them without adequate resources to match that expectation that is put upon them because we've seen the track record in health care. We've seen the track record in education where they've chosen, the members opposite have chosen not to provide the resources along with the responsibility. When that happens, it's to the detriment of all Saskatchewan people.

Now it's interesting. The changes, Mr. Speaker, that are suggested in this first issue that the minister brought forward was on the issue of improving the tools available to a city to collect and enforce property taxes on mobile homes and house trailers. So the idea, Mr. Speaker, that if you have individuals living in a mobile home or a house trailer, that the government is able to properly tax those individuals as they are supposed to, able to tax them for the services that they are accessing, my concern, Mr. Speaker, with only having the ability or . . . In looking at the minister's comments, my concerns are for the individuals living in those mobile trailers or the mobile homes and because we know that individuals living in mobile homes, as with individuals throughout Saskatchewan, have faced a great number of challenges in the last couple of years with this Sask Party government.

We know that for many people in Saskatchewan — perhaps especially many people living in mobile homes and trailers — that life has become more difficult. Life has become more expensive under the Sask Party government. And there are a number of reasons. And I can see why perhaps the changes brought forward in this legislation, addressing the specific issue of taxes, could perhaps be coming forward because, Mr. Speaker, if individuals are not able to pay their taxes, if they're living in a mobile home and there's problems with them being able to make ends meet and pay their taxes, I think there are a number of reasons why that could be. And I think those reasons, Mr. Speaker, are directly tied to the changes that we've seen under the Sask Party government and how life has become more expensive and less affordable under the Sask Party government.

I mean the first issue you could think of, Mr. Speaker, is the government's broken promise on providing a percentage of PST [provincial sales tax] revenue to municipalities — a promise that was clearly made, Mr. Speaker, to municipalities, a promise that municipalities were expecting. They were expecting this because they recognized that, with the way commodity prices work and with the examples that we've seen over the course of time in Saskatchewan, we know that commodity prices do go up and down. And perhaps, you know, in the last year we see evidence of the up-and-down nature, the cyclical nature of commodity prices.

And I know members opposite . . . having predicted \$3 billion in potash revenue, predictions that were hugely over what common sense people would suggest would be realistic and reachable, I could see why, Mr. Speaker, when we have that kind of budgeting and that kind of talk on the issues of commodities coming out of the government, I can see why municipalities were counting on that revenue from the PST because the whole idea of providing a percentage of the PST revenue to municipalities was that they would be in some way buffered or taken out of that up-and-down nature of resource

revenue, that they would be able to more accurately predict what their revenue would be in the coming years and in turn they would be able to do better planning at the municipal level and provide better services to people in their local area. And that's a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

So I could see why municipalities may in fact want to have a better access to taxing mobile homes and trailers because every dollar is precious to municipalities, Mr. Speaker, and especially when municipalities are facing the broken promise that they've experienced from the Sask Party government on the issue of revenue sharing. I can see how they would want to have the issue of being able to tax mobile homes clear and straightforward and have it set up in such a way that those that should be paying are paying. So I see that as pretty obvious why municipalities might want that type of change because of the broken promise that they're facing with the Sask Party government.

[15:15]

Now why might municipalities have trouble accessing the tax dollars of people living in trailer parks or trailer homes? There could be a number of reasons why they might be having problems, but I think it's because, Mr. Speaker, life under the Sask Party has become more expensive and less affordable.

For example if the person living in that mobile home is a student, Mr. Speaker, they're seeing their tuition go up a lot over the last few years, Mr. Speaker. So you might have an individual living in a trailer park, living in a mobile home, wanting to improve their lot in life. Perhaps it's a young person or perhaps it's an older person that's decided to go back and receive educational training so that they are better prepared for the workforce and better prepared to fully participate in the modern economy that we have here in Saskatchewan. Now that individual, Mr. Speaker, when one is in school, if they're living in a mobile home or any type of housing for that matter, Mr. Speaker, life is becoming more expensive because tuition is going up, and that's a pattern that we've seen under the Sask Party government. We see lots of talk about this so-called tuition management system, Mr. Speaker, but at the end of the day, any student living in a mobile home in any part of the province, all they can safely assume about a tuition management strategy is that tuition will be going up.

So I can see, Mr. Speaker, why — if you have a student living in a mobile home — I can see why they are perhaps having problems paying their property taxes because under the Sask Party government life has become much more expensive.

Now if one is living in a mobile home in a trailer park, Mr. Speaker, it's necessary to ensure that the mobile home is hooked up to all the utilities in the municipality. So an individual needs heat in that mobile home. And this leads me to another area, Mr. Speaker, where life has become more expensive under the Sask Party government. And I can see why individuals living in a mobile home might be having trouble paying their property taxes because, Mr. Speaker, under the Sask Party government we have seen utility rates go up. We have seen rates for SaskEnergy go up. We have seen rates for SaskPower go up. And every indication, Mr. Speaker, from members opposite is that that will continue, that this is their

way of operating business.

So in the same way that in my earlier remarks about the issue of jurisdictional responsibilities and how off-loading a provincial responsibility can be a burden on municipalities, Mr. Speaker, changes to things like utility rates can also be an off-loading and placing a burden on Saskatchewan people — the taxpayers, the ratepayers here in the province.

And so I know that is a concern because many people, many people living in mobile homes, Mr. Speaker, they are having to pay their property taxes, and that can cause problems for them because they are paying more in tuition if they're a student or if their children are pursuing post-secondary education. They are paying more in natural gas to heat their home, Mr. Speaker, and they're paying more for electricity in order to run their appliances, plug in their car, and do everything else that we do with electricity. So I can see problems.

Now the individuals living in mobile homes who are paying property taxes . . . changes that in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 108, are designed to make it easier, make it more clear in how municipalities are supposed to and can tax individuals living in mobile homes. I know the individuals living in the mobile homes that are paying the property taxes; I can understand some more reasons why they may be having trouble paying their property taxes.

And another area can be the area of camping fees. We've seen camping fees go up, Mr. Speaker, and so everyone . . . Holidays are an important time for everyone in the province. Everyone likes to get out and experience all the great corners and nooks and crannies in Saskatchewan, and that often means people like going camping. And camping traditionally, Mr. Speaker, is an affordable way for many families to vacation.

You know, some people do have big fifth wheelers or motorhomes that can cost a lot of money, and that's fine. Some people like to travel in luxury. Other people, Mr. Speaker, like a pup tent. Other people like to sleep under the stars. Other people might have an old tent trailer and might have a favourite campground that they've traditionally gone to. But what these individuals have experienced, Mr. Speaker, is that life has become more expensive for them to go on their camping trips. That reduces the amount of disposable income they have, Mr. Speaker, for paying things like their property tax bill. So I see how that's a problem.

The area of health care, Mr. Speaker, if there's an individual living in a mobile home having trouble paying their property taxes, another reason they might be having problems or might be worried are because of the recent changes the Sask Party government have made with respect to providing coverage to visit a chiropractor.

Many individuals in the province, some people, many individuals truly benefit and value and appreciate the relationship they have with their chiropractor. Because of either a workplace injury or a recreational injury, some sort of incident that's happened in life, they've found it necessary to go to a chiropractor. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, having met with a good number of them at my constituency office and replied to a great number of emails and having returned many

phone calls, this is an issue that those that visit a chiropractor, they truly do appreciate, value, and respect the role of their chiropractor in maintaining their health.

Now I wish, Mr. Speaker, the respect that those individuals have for their chiropractor, I wish that same level of respect would have been present by members of the government in dealing with the chiropractors in the province. Because what we saw from the government was the complete opposite of respect.

We saw the government engaging in negotiations, going through negotiations, coming to an agreement, suggesting that they were bargaining in good faith. They come up with a new agreement to fund chiropractic services in the province, and what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They did not show up to sign the agreement. They went through this huge charade, this façade of bargaining in good faith, and then at the end of the day when the minister was supposed to show up to sign the paper, he was a no-show. And that's a lack of respect for individuals in the profession.

So I know as I'm speaking to many people in the province, individuals that are receiving chiropractic services, many of whom may be living in a mobile home, having trouble paying their bills, I know when they've seen that kind of treatment of a well-respected profession here in the province, it worries them. Because they say if the government is willing to treat a respected profession in that manner, I can only, I can only . . . I can't even think, I can't even think how they'll respect me as an individual, me as a taxpayer, me as a person living in a trailer park in any one of our constituencies throughout the province.

Because what's happened, similar to the other situations, there has been an off-loading of responsibility. Instead of the government funding a service — a service that may cost a dollar but it's shown, Mr. Speaker, that it saves many other dollars down the road — instead of funding that properly, it's being off-loaded to individuals in the province, some of the most vulnerable.

So you have an individual living in a trailer park, living in a mobile home, faced with changed legislation in how the municipality is able to access the tax dollars that they should be paying.

And I understand and I completely recognize the need for municipalities to access tax dollars. That makes perfect sense to me. But I also can greatly empathize with the individuals living in mobile homes, living in a trailer park faced with increased tuition, faced with increased SaskPower rates, faced with increased SaskEnergy rates, faced with paying more to visit their chiropractor, faced with more when they go and visit their favourite campground in the province. I can understand, Mr. Speaker, why these individuals living in that trailer park might have trouble paying their bills.

And the issue of chiropractors raises an important one when it comes to a user-pay health care system, and I know this would worry many . . . It worries myself; it worries many people in my constituency. And I think it worries many of those individuals living in the mobile homes being asked to pay property taxes. And that's the issue raised by the Minister of Finance in North Battleford when he suggested that user fees were part of the

solution for health care and that that debate should occur. And it seems puzzling to me, Mr. Speaker, why that conversation would be opened up, why that door would be opened. If their true convictions to their core were that that was not the way to go, why would that issue be brought up? And I know that worries many people living in trailer parks, many people that are being asked to pay property taxes. That is a great concern.

So that addresses some of the first areas addressed by the minister in his opening remarks when he introduced Bill No. 108, this issue of clearing the responsibilities and the roles between the municipality and the provincial government.

In my opinion, I say that's a good thing so long as it's not a huge off-loading of responsibility and burden and cost, a huge off-loading that we've seen in so many areas with how this provincial government deals with either a school board or a health region or another level of government. So long as it is improving the situation, so long as it is not making life more difficult for people in municipalities, so long as it's not providing . . . so long as it's not stipulating increased responsibilities without the ability to properly pay for and afford those expectations and changes, then in my opinion at least I think that is a reasonable thing.

And if the consultation, the proper consultation has occurred with the municipalities, Mr. Speaker, that too needs to occur. And I've given a number of speeches on this government's inability to properly consult with important groups in the province, and that won't be my speech today. But I will say there's a great amount of evidence to suggest that when it comes to consultation, this government certainly falls short, and that is the consistent track record.

So the second area the minister commented on in his introductory remarks on Bill No. 108 is that he says, "This Bill proposes to provide the option for city councils to require criminal record checks in the election process." So this is a request, Mr. Speaker, coming from, I assume, individuals at the municipal level wanting to ensure that we have the best, most honest, most competent individuals serving in elected office in this province.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that's a sentiment that is appreciated and shared by people in this Assembly and shared by many people around the province. Whether it is at the federal level, the provincial level or the municipal level, or whether it's to elected school boards, whether it is election to serve in a First Nation, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that we have good, honest people working in those areas.

So again tying in to my earlier comments about consultation, if the proper consultation has occurred with municipalities, if the desire for this change of providing criminal record checks or requiring criminal record checks in the case of election, if that is a request that's coming forward from municipalities, I think that's a good thing because it provides greater transparency, and it provides a greater understanding of the backgrounds of individuals.

Now it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, we can do a criminal . . . A criminal record check can be done and perhaps information can be learned. But I would . . . The member from Rosemont earlier

today in a member's statement talked about pardons and the granting of pardons here in the country. So this issue of criminal record checks also opens up the issue in the consideration of pardons and whether or not an individual receiving the pardon is in fact worthy to receive the pardon, raising the issue that perhaps the individual being granted the pardon did not deserve the pardon.

We saw in recent days, Mr. Speaker, with the situation of a walker, that a pardon was granted for someone who was a convicted sex offender. A pardon was granted, not because this individual had . . . that there was evidence that the reform had taken place or that children and youths were safe in his care or around him, but more or less, as I understand through media reports and having done some initial reading on it, Mr. Speaker, that it's done just as a matter of routine business. That you can still have an individual who has not reformed, an individual who has done many things, an individual who still can pose a great threat to the public but could be granted a pardon.

So it's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker. If we're going down this road of requiring criminal record checks for the municipal level, we have to ask ourselves how pardons play into that process. Is the pardon not screening out an individual who still poses a great threat, an individual who has not reformed, an individual who has not changed his or her behaviour? So we have to ask ourselves.

True, the municipality might be requesting this change, but we have to look at the intent of their request. And I would think their desire for this request would be to ensure a greater level of transparency, a greater level of safety for their constituents, and safety for their financial resources as well. Because as I said, under the Sask Party government, life has become more expensive, so every dollar that municipalities have in their possession is an important one.

[15:30]

So it may be fine to bring in the requirement for criminal record checks. But we have to ask ourselves, is this going to accomplish what we want to do? And I think what municipalities want to do is provide greater transparency for the backgrounds of their elected officials and provide a greater amount of security and safety for their constituents and for their resources.

And it's been clear from the past few days that an individual, I think, that most people in the country would deem as dangerous, most people in the country would deem as unreformed, most people in the country would see as a threat to their children, when an individual like that is the recipient of a pardon, I think it greatly calls into question the system of granting pardons as routine business and whether or not the individual is actually deserving of receiving that pardon.

I don't pretend to be an expert of the court system or the granting of pardons. In some ways these are my thoughts after seeing recent events and doing some initial reading and talking to some people. But I know in bringing forward these changes in Bill No. 108, changes that would require the provision of criminal record checks at the municipal level for those interested in serving their fellow constituents, then we have to

ask if criminal record checks are the silver bullet that will ensure municipal individuals operate with greater transparency, greater accountability, and that on those that still present a threat are being handled in a proper manner.

Well the last area, Mr. Speaker, that was mentioned by the minister in introducing this Bill, the last area where he said these amendments would affect life for Saskatchewan people, he says, "Third, Mr. Speaker, this Bill introduces amendments in several areas that improve the effectiveness of the Act on technical and administrative matters."

So again I would tie back my comments to my earlier remarks. When making any sort of change, any sort of amendment to legislation, it's important to get it right. It's important to ensure that the changes that are being suggested will in fact make the situation better.

So it's my hope that with these technical details and the fine print, as problems are identified and suggestions are thought of, it's my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the proper consultation has occurred between the provincial government and levels of municipal government to ensure that the technical changes in this Act, Bill No. 108, are in fact hitting the mark, that they're not causing more problems, because it should always be the desire of government to make life better, to make life more straightforward, and to improve the efficiency of operation of government, whether that's at the provincial or municipal level or whether that's in a school board or health region.

That can't be used as an excuse, Mr. Speaker, for off-loading a burden, for off-loading debt. It can't be an excuse for making hurtful cuts, short-sighted cuts. We saw today in question period the issue of Dutch elm disease, how the government's desire to look for money under every possible cushion in the government sofa, taking \$500,000 out of a program that protects trees.

We can see how in many instances the cuts have been short-sighted. The actions by government have been short-sighted. They haven't been looking long term, thinking with a long-term strategy in how to best prepare the province for the future.

So it's my hope that with these smaller technical details that affect the administration of the Act, it's my hope that the proper consultation has occurred with the municipalities and that the spirit of the changes is one of a desire for true improvement as opposed to the other track record we've seen with this government of off-loading and of short-sighted cuts.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, in speaking on Bill No. 108, *An Act to amend The Cities Act and to make a consequential amendment to The Land Surveys Act, 2000*, my comments have been organized in three areas. The one area was about addressing the changes that are being brought forward by government that would off-load some of the government's responsibility to the municipal level. I said that's fine so long as it's actually making the situation better, and that it's not an unfair off-loading of responsibility and cost.

I also said on that issue, Mr. Speaker, with those changes being directed at the ability of municipalities to tax mobile homes and

trailers. I understand why municipalities want to go after every possible tax dollar. I understand why they want to do that, Mr. Speaker, because they've been faced with a broken promise. They've been faced with a broken promise on the sharing of PST revenue from the provincial government. So I understand why they want to go after those tax dollars.

And I also understand the very real problems that people living in those mobile homes may be facing because they're facing increased tuition. They're facing increased SaskPower bills. They're facing increased SaskEnergy bills. They're facing increased camping fees. They're facing increased costs to get health care. There are increased costs across the board because life has become more expensive under the Sask Party government.

So that was my first section of comments. My second section, Mr. Speaker, was on the issue of city councils to require criminal record checks in the electoral process. I said so long as the proper consultation has occurred with municipalities, I can see merit in this. But we have to ask ourselves as legislators — given the recent incidents we've seen around the issue of granting of pardons to individuals that are not reformed, that are not safe to be around young people — we have to ask ourselves whether with the granting of pardons as routine business, whether or not by introducing criminal record checks, whether that is the silver bullet that we need with respect to making operations in the municipality run better, run more efficiently, and in a more transparent manner.

And my third area of comments, Mr. Speaker, was around the area of administrative changes that are of a technical nature and designed to streamline a process and make it better. So long as that is the actual intent, so long as it's not the off-loading, and so long as it's not the short-sighted cuts that we've seen in so many areas . . . Whether it's Dutch elm, whether it's chiropractic services, there are so many examples, Mr. Speaker, where this government has gone after small amounts of money to make a short-sighted gain that will have a long-term consequence and negative effect on the people of the province.

So, so long as the technical changes are not of a hurtful nature, then I can see the merit in going forward with those changes. But that requires that proper consultation has occurred, something that this government has proven that it is not very good at achieving.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on Bill No. 108, and at this time the opposition is prepared to send this Bill to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs that Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I designate that Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009* be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 109

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 109** — *The Municipalities 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, once again it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to rise in this House and take part in the debate on this particular Bill. As a representative of the fine folks of Regina Northeast, I know I've said this before, Mr. Speaker, but it bears repeating: that whenever you travel this province of Saskatchewan, you meet nothing but fine people, and I can assure you, you won't find any finer people than those in Regina Northeast.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a not only a pleasure. It's an honour to be able to represent them in this fine Assembly and, in this particular case, to take part in the debate on this Bill, Bill 109, the Act to amend the municipal Act and to make related amendments to the local government elections Act.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think perhaps we overlook the important role that local governments play in the administrative procedures of this province and to move this province forward in a very progressive way. And I've had the opportunity in the past, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure many, many members in this Assembly also have . . . is had the opportunity to serve in local government. I had the opportunity of being the councillor for division 5 in the RM [rural municipality] of Clayton 333, a rural municipality located in the northeast side of the province. And, Mr. Speaker, it truly was an honour.

It was, I suppose, my first way of entering into the world of politics at a local level. But it's in some ways a very demanding role because it's an area . . . of course it's your home area. Most cases you're representing your home area. And your friends and your neighbours, they become your ratepayers and your constituents, so it becomes a pretty demanding role.

And I find it very important, and I believe very much in the importance and the role that's played by municipal government and the representatives thereof to be able to move the area forward in a progressive way and to do so by extracting the best value for the dollars spent because it's the taxpayers' dollars that you're spending. It's your money as a taxpayer, but it's also the money of your friends and your neighbours that you are using when you're making that decision in regards to the decisions of a local government.

Now when we speak of rural municipalities, I think it's automatic that the first thing that comes into mind as a responsibility of a rural municipality would be to look after the roads in our municipality. And it certainly is a primary responsibility, and it's always been a very important responsibility.

And I can remember when the RM of Clayton that I had the opportunity of representing, I can remember as a youngster, the roads in that municipality were being improved at the fastest possible rate that the municipality and the officials within the municipality could at that time.

But as the case, I believe, right across this province, it was a very dense population. There was perhaps a farm family on almost every quarter section of land. Certainly there was a farm family about a mile apart down the road, in some cases even less than that, and therefore there was a lot of demand for the improvement of the roads within the municipality. And I can remember as a youngster going to elementary school, well probably even past my high school years, before the road where my folks farmed was improved to the point where it was considered an all-weather road.

Prior to that it was simply a dirt road that had I believe the local folks, the local people living along that road, chipped in on a regular basis and would pay part of the cost of having the road gravelled. And part of that cost would be shared by the municipality. The other part was shared by those people who lived along the road in order to be able to travel that road, particularly in the summertime when the rains would come.

And if you've ever had the opportunity of travelling down a dirt road — a dirt road in Saskatchewan — after rain you know full well that that can be quite a challenge. And when that road was the only road you had to get in and out of your farmyard, well then of course it became a very important link to the outside world, and you would do what you could to improve that.

And in this case it was the municipality, came up with a program where they would share in the costs of the gravel if the ratepayers who lived along that road would share in the costs also. And it was a good program, Mr. Speaker. It was a program that stretched the municipal dollars and made them be able to do a little bit more with the ratepayers' dollars that they collected through the taxes. And it provided the opportunity for individuals — farmers who lived along that particular road and ratepayers lived along that road — to be able to chip in and then have gravel on that road so that when it did rain that they would have an all-weather road. They could get out to town or get back from town if they were in town and got caught in a rain storm. It was quite important, and it was certainly a step forward.

Then came of course the extension of the grid roads program in this province which is I think a very valuable program and one that's probably often overlooked . . . at the design of that road when it was first implemented and the design of that system when it was first implemented, how important it was to link the entire province together through a good quality, all-weather road. And as a result of that, we ended up with a really good network of municipal roads, municipal grid roads which are built to a high standard, a relatively high standard and that are

able to withstand in a lot of cases the pressures of the modern-day farming, the modern-day farming having changed so much, so much in the last 20 years or 25 years.

Twenty five years ago it was commonplace where, at least up in our area there, for a farmer to be able to take his proceeds, his grain to town to the elevator which by the way was located in a community. It was usually about every seven miles apart along the main line, along the railroad line I should say.

And in the RM of Clayton's situation, the railroad ran along basically the southern border of the RM, the sort of border of the RM being Highway 49, and the rail line ran basically right along the 49 Highway. And it connected the communities of Stenen, Hyas, Norquay as the three major communities in the RM, and they of course were the communities in which the elevator companies established their elevators and their operations. And therefore the grain that was raised in the vast majority of the RM moved to these three communities. Some, I think, along the west side probably moved into the community of Sturgis, but the rest of them moved into the three major communities in the RM, and they were all located along the southern end of the RM. So you can understand, Mr. Speaker, there was a flow of commerce from the rural area, from the farm land, that flow went south and to the three communities.

[15:45]

Therefore those links, those grid roads that were eventually developed and within the RM became very important because they were important links of commerce for farmers to get their products to the elevator system or their livestock to market. It was also a way of bringing the needs of the farm community back in, whether it'd be the fuel or the fertilizers or whatever those requirements might be.

So in Clayton's situation, in some ways we were a bit lucky because the No. 8 Highway in the . . . searching my memory here, but it was in the early, probably the early '60s when No. 8 Highway was established north of Norquay that ran all the way through the communities of Arabella and Swan Plain and all up to the forest reserve, the Porcupine Forest Reserve. And that, Mr. Speaker, was really a boost to the area because the Department of Highways took over.

Before that, it was really a grid road, and I would say probably a grid road that was built to the standards of the '50s. And then it was, when the Department of Highways took it over, they put a thin membrane surface on it and made it dust-free. And for many years, it was adequate because for many years the traffic on that road was not a heavy traffic. It was a traffic of farmers using 2- and 3-ton trucks to move their products to market. And that particular road was able to withstand that pressure.

The other arteries of commerce — running north of Hyas was a grid road, a well-built grid road, a well-maintained grid road. And of course the grid road south, north of Stenen, was a primary grid road. It later became a primary grid road and therefore was built even to a little higher standards and therefore was able to withstand the pressures of the movement of commerce from the farm gate to the railroad sidings and to the elevator systems.

So, Mr. Speaker, those became very important arteries to that particular RM. And I would say that I take my hats off to those people who were municipal leaders in that particular RM prior to my involvement because they were the ones that developed in a lot of cases new roads, a lot of cases old roads that were not developed before, at least not in a meaningful way. And they improved them to a standard where they were able to be more than adequate to meet the needs of the community, the farm community at that time.

But as you and I both know, the industry of farming has changed dramatically in the last 20, 25 years. And today we're seeing the elevator system that were established by our grandfathers some seven miles apart, and we see that disappear and being replaced by great inland terminals, and in many cases anywhere from 50 to 100 miles from the farm gate. And therefore it makes it no longer economically viable for a farmer to be able to move his product with a 2- or 3-ton truck.

So what do we see it replaced with? We see it replaced with semi-trailer units. And a lot of them are B-trains which are more axles, more train, more weight, and therefore more pressure on our road system. So we're seeing that a lot of the thin membrane highways — and I will use No. 8 again for an example — thin membrane highways just simply aren't able to hold up to that increased weight.

So we are seeing, for example in the RM of Clayton's case, they have now come up with a designated truck route that's taken the heavy trucks off of No. 8 and moved it on the grid road system, moved it on the grid road system so that No. 8 highway now is once again still a thin membrane highway. But with removing of that extra weight, that commerce of agriculture off that highway, it is now become economically viable to maintain that highway as a dust-free surface and to do so in a way that the highway-motoring public can use that road and do so free of dust.

And it's an important link because really No. 8 Highway is not only a link for the agricultural community, it's also a link into the forest reserve and a link for tourism to the lakes that are located north of there. Some of the better fishing in Saskatchewan can be found there, Mr. Speaker. And so it is important that that highway be maintained in a dust-free environment, but to be done so that's economically viable. So to achieve that, the Department of Highways and the RM have entered into an agreement that has established a truck route that takes that heavy truck route off of No. 8 Highway, moves it over onto the grid system, and moves it then out to No. 49 Highway.

Then that has resulted in the increased truck pressure on the municipal roads, this is true, Mr. Speaker, but it's by far more economical to be able to maintain a grid road or a gravel road than it is a thin membrane dust-free surface road. And the government has reached an arrangement with the RM that in exchange for a certain fee each year, the RM maintains those roads. And they do so, I think, with the extra government money, they are able to put extra gravel on the roads. I think they even been able to put extra patrols on the road to, or extra times the patrols go on that road, to help maintain it. And I have had the opportunity, just as recently as this last weekend, to travel on some of that and it's a well-kept road. It's a well-kept

road, and my hat's off to the municipality for doing that.

And I remember when I was on council, we looked at basically an early version of a designated road system, and that we looked at the fact that we had three grid roads that really serviced the municipality and serviced the farmers within that municipality. And we needed to ensure that we were able to maintain those roads to the best of . . . at all possible, I guess you'd say, for the ratepayers of the RM because it was not only the artery for commerce for farmers to move their product to market, it was also the artery of transportation for the folks to go, whether it be into larger communities for other services or health care services or whatever they may need. It was also the artery of transportation for our bus system for our children to go to high schools and for the buses to run.

So those three roads were quickly identified as the major, major arteries of that area. Therefore it was essential that they be maintained in the best possible way so that we developed then a program. And it was an interesting program because when I got on council — there was of course the six councillors and the reeve — but when I got on council, we had an interesting system of allocation of gravel for the RMs for the division was done simply that way. The amount of money that was allocated for gravel that year was divided by six and each councillor would receive that much allocation.

And at first glance you would think, well that was fair. But in some ways it was, and some ways it wasn't. Because at that time No. 8 Highway which ran through the divisions No. 2 and No. 6 — pardon me, No. 1 and No. 3 — that particular highway, which was the main artery for the area and for the crop farmers in that area, was maintained by the Department of Highways so that the two councillors there really didn't have to put any revenue into that particular artery, whereas the other four councillors did. We had to share the other two roads.

So it was determined, and I think it was a step forward, that the three major grid roads — the one running east and west and the two running north and south — they would be gravelled at 100 yards per mile per year, and that would come out of the overall gravel allocation. That would come out of the overall gravel allocation. So those three grid roads would get gravelled every year, and the cost of that gravel and the cost of putting that gravel on those roads would come out of the overall allocation. The balance of that allocation would then be divided by six and each municipality got, each councillor got that amount of revenue to spend or that much money to spend on gravel in his or her division.

And that I think brought a greater degree of fairness to the system because it ensured that all ratepayers were contributing to the maintaining of the major thoroughfares, the major arteries. And it was done on a regular basis and it was the advice, basically of the engineers that were available to us through the Department of Municipal Affairs, that to maintain a grid road and to maintain a grid road in good standing and to be able to extend the life of that road, it would require a minimum of 100 yards of gravel per mile per year.

So basically we were meeting the minimum. But as that program was introduced and carried on year in and year out, by about year 5, year 6 you could start to really see a difference in

the roads. They were much better condition; they were firming up. There was a lot less soft spots. There was a lot less really requirement for specialized services in particular areas of the road and that they were being . . . I think you'd say just starting to see some level of improvement on those roads because of the regular maintenance and the fact that that regular maintenance meant that the roads were being kept in better condition. And even though there was increased traffic on those roads, even increased weight on those roads, the regular maintenance made the difference, I think. And if you travel on those roads today, I think we'll all agree that they are in good shape. And like I say that with a degree of certainty, having driven on a couple of them just this recent weekend.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that there is a real importance that we have the proper programming, I guess you would say for . . . meet the needs of the present, but also looking into the foreseeable future and to be able to do so in a way that's cost-efficient to the ratepayers of this great province of ours. And with the rail line and the decisions made by the rail companies over the last decade or thereabouts to abandon a number of, hundreds of miles of branch lines in this great province, that has of course moved that weight, that extra pressure — I call it pressure — of movement of grain over onto the road system. It's taken it off the rail bed and moved it over onto the road system. And, you know, we wonder why that is. I suppose when the grain companies — and the railroad companies, rather — look at the efficiencies, they would probably look at a reduced amount of rail line means greater efficiencies for them and perhaps a greater bottom line.

And yet in other jurisdictions in the world which have been established a lot longer than Canada — and I'm thinking about Europe in particular, Mr. Speaker — you'll find that in Europe the greater emphasis is on the rail line and less emphasis on moving product by road. And that product, including people, if you look at Europe, you'll find that they have a rail network there that's very efficient, moves their product but also moves a massive amount of people, moves so in a timely fashion.

And it's interesting that Europe has seen fit to move, I suppose, more and more of their product to the railroad system, and we in Canada are moving away from that and moving more onto the truck system where you are hauling smaller amounts of units over greater distances, and I think probably at more cost per unit. And it's interesting that we've decided to go that way, and we'll see what the future holds, I suppose. But in the meantime, in the meantime what this does is it creates greater pressures on the roads. It creates a greater pressure on the municipalities out there to maintain these roads.

And the municipalities are limited, they're limited in their ability to generate resources because basically they have the opportunity to generate resources and revenues only from one source, and that's the taxpayer. And that's through a property tax levy, and that has I suppose created some issues out there in rural Saskatchewan. And I would hope that the government would look at the pressures that the local governments are under and look at meaningful ways to support them in a more financial, secure way.

And it has to be in a way, Mr. Speaker, where the municipalities can count on that level of finance, count on that level of support

so they can make long-term plans. I think it's very important that we have RMs that take a look at their municipalities and look at developing designated road systems within that municipality to ensure that they are able to maintain those systems in an adequate way, maintain them at a level that's affordable to the ratepayers, but also provides the services to those ratepayers because that's very important.

[16:00]

It is very important, particularly in today's world where the agriculture economy has changed so much. It used to be that you could take a truckload of grain to town if there was room in the elevator and so on and so forth. Today it's different. You're called. The companies will call you and say you have so long to deliver your grain. They want this particular grade and they know you have it. They give you a call and say, bring it in and you have so many days to deliver it. And in order to do that, you need to have the ability to rely on a road system that will support that.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we have those services available to us in rural Saskatchewan. As the population of Saskatchewan thins out — and I will use that word, thins out — it becomes even more important because you're starting to travel greater distances between communities. You're starting to travel greater distances between farmsteads, and you're starting to travel greater distances, both for your own personal use or whether that be the involvement of your industry, farming.

But also for the school buses out there that travel, in a lot of cases, along isolated roads carrying our precious future. The children that are on those buses are our future. And we need to ensure that they have good quality roads to travel on whether it be in the summer, or whether it be in the spring or fall or the winter, that we . . . Despite maybe a winter storm, that that bus is still able to travel and travel with a fair amount of safety to ensure that the children are able to get to school or, more importantly, get home from school if caught in a winter storm.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we have the ability for the municipalities to be able to identify what their needs are, and what their needs are as far as being able to maintain their roads, and which roads need to be maintained and to what level maintenance needs to be to ensure that we have a good quality, safe road to drive on so that we have the ability to move the farm product to the market, whether it be through grain to our grain inland terminal or perhaps livestock.

Although in Saskatchewan today, I think their livestock population is dropping and dropping fairly rapidly. Although there has been some changes, some minor changes in some of the prices as I understand it, but it's still not enough to cause people to say, hey I want to, I had decided to get out of the business, but I will now stay in it. I haven't heard any of that, Mr. Speaker.

I did have the chance this last week though to talk to a young fellow. I say a young fellow. He's younger than I am. He's not necessarily young, but younger than I am, and he'd been in the business for over 15 years. And he told me that last year was going to be the last year, but definitely this is.

And he's calving out something like 120 head of cattle or something like that — pretty well on the downhill side of the calving operation. I think he had 20 or 22 head to go yet, to calf out, but other than that he was done. But he said that was it this year. He wasn't going to put up his feed with the intentions of feeding it. He'd probably put up, bale the hay with the intentions of selling it, but he certainly wasn't going to stay in business any longer; it was enough. He'd operated his farming operation long enough and at, what he said, had a loss each and every year to the point where it was no longer fun. And once you lose the fun in something, I suppose that it's very difficult to continue on. He was telling me it was just getting difficult to get up to go out in the middle of the night to check on the cows calving because it just didn't have the same spring in his step.

But that's why, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that municipalities are properly consulted because they are the folks that are on the front line. They are the folks that make the decision. They are the folks that know what are required in their community, and they know what the folks require. And this is why it is important that the government sit down and consult with these people to get first-line information, first-line information so that they can make the right decisions, and that government can make the right decisions on a level of support to meet the needs of those municipalities.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that those discussions take place and that the government has done a fair amount of the consulting and has actually sat down with farm leaders in rural Saskatchewan and gotten the information right from those who are facing the problems each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill, Bill 109, the right title here, *An Act to amend The Municipalities Act and to make related amendments to The Local Government Election Act* is a Bill that needs further study, and it needs to be looked at closely. And it needs to have the ability for the legislature here to be able to ensure that the government has done its consultation, that the government has got the information it requires to make the right decisions and has incorporated that in this Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the role of the committee within our structure here.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, we'll let the committee do its work. We know that committee will do good work. We'll know that committee will bring back recommendations, whether it be through the committee system to the legislature or perhaps through to the government and they will make, if necessary, they will make whatever changes may be identified. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that we sent this Bill on to committee so that the committee could have the opportunity to look at this Bill and do the work of the committee.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate and move this committee to . . . I just move this Bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Municipal Affairs that Bill No. 109

be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I designate that Bill No. 109, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009* be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill now stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 110

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 110** — *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise and make a few remarks about *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*. Mr. Speaker, this a substantial rewrite of *The Northern Municipalities Act* and with substantial changes within the Act itself.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a few specific changes I'd like to spend my time on this afternoon. One is a change that provides for criminal record checks for those running for municipal office in northern Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the issue of accountability and the issue of being able to rely upon criminal record checks to check whether or not you want specific individuals running for you for elected office is one that we should all adhere to, Mr. Speaker. I know by just a matter of routine within our own political party, the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan, it's a requirement that all candidates for election or for nomination — in fact prior to being nominated in their constituencies — have to supply to the party a criminal record check.

Now a criminal record check is used as part of a screening tool to look at suitability of potential candidates for elected office. Mr. Speaker, I think that's the type of tool that should be used by organizations, political parties, municipalities to ensure that in fact the people that are running for elected office adhere to a standard, Mr. Speaker.

Now one of the problems I have, though, with this particular legislation is, Mr. Speaker, this is a criteria that's established for northern municipalities but isn't necessarily universal in its application to all municipalities. Again, Mr. Speaker, although I think it's a good idea. And it should be applied, Mr. Speaker, I think that it should be applied more generally to all municipalities, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's important that all municipal

officials and all provincial officials and — for that matter — federal officials, all meet a very high standard of conduct and principles of positions, Mr. Speaker, prior to running for elected office and that the people of Saskatchewan should have a right or the people of a municipality should have the right to know whether or not an individual has a criminal record or has a past that should be questioned.

Mr. Speaker, the difficulty with this is we find this in *The Northern Municipalities Act*, but we don't find it in other municipal Acts, Mr. Speaker, and we don't see it in the Saskatchewan elections Act. Mr. Speaker, I think that would be an admirable change in *The Elections Act*, that it be a criteria that all candidates for election have to provide a criminal record check, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they in fact have a criminal-free background, Mr. Speaker, and that those considerations have to be made and widely known, if not eliminating . . . I don't believe it should be necessarily the case of elimination of a candidate, Mr. Speaker, but it should have to be a known to the general public that they are electing somebody with that particular background, Mr. Speaker.

So where we require that for a select group of municipal officials in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we don't require that today for provincial representatives, members of the legislature like myself and yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and others. We are not required to provide that same level of scrutiny. Mr. Speaker, I think that it would be appropriate that all members would have to provide that level of scrutiny.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people in northern Saskatchewan, by the nature of their communities and the distance between communities, have a number of unique needs that aren't necessarily the same in, as an example, highly populated cities or even smaller urban municipalities in southern Saskatchewan because some of the challenges in northern Saskatchewan, because of the remoteness to other areas create unique situations, Mr. Speaker. And so this legislation is trying to reflect upon those unique situations within this legislation, but also to bring it more into line with legislation, other municipal legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, just providing some utilities and utility services in some communities in northern Saskatchewan might be more difficult, as an example, than providing those same utilities in a southern community. If you have a community, as an example, that doesn't have road access year-round — and Wollaston Lake would be a good example, Mr. Speaker — there are certain challenges in providing services to a community without road access than there are in other communities where there are road access.

So, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about undertaking improvements to *The Northern Municipalities Act* and at the same time examining whether or not there needs to be specific legislation, specific sections to deal with issues in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that life in northern Saskatchewan is not necessarily the same as it is in southern communities, and the northern leaders need to have the ability to meet the challenges in different and more innovative ways in many cases, Mr. Speaker. You have a very small population in many

cases over large geographical areas. Even in communities, you'll see northern communities considerably more spread out than you will see in some urban areas in southern Saskatchewan.

As well northern communities face unique social and economic challenges that governments need to be even more flexible and creative in working to establish even base services in their communities whether it be a service station or a grocery store, Mr. Speaker, or other very important services in their communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is always important when you're dealing with a piece of legislation that is as encompassing as this piece of legislation is, is that there be consultation with the communities and that communities feel that they have had input into the changes that are being made and into the direction the legislation is taking.

Northern municipalities, like any municipalities, want autonomy. They want the independent right to make decisions in the best interest of their citizens. And, Mr. Speaker, they would like to be able to have taken into consideration in their decision making what's best for their citizens in each and every case.

And, Mr. Speaker, this legislation, as I indicated before, is a significant piece of legislation, some 170 to 200 pages in length, Mr. Speaker — basically a general rewrite of the entire northern municipalities . . . And, Mr. Speaker, because it's so specific and such a significant rewrite, Mr. Speaker, that level of consultation needs to be greater than if it were just a matter of a few amendments.

[16:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, we do understand that in general that the northern municipalities like the piece of legislation before us. With any piece of legislation, there are particular sections and areas where some of the leaders in northern Saskatchewan are not as comfortable as with other sections. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a process of both give and take. And northern leaders in general — my understanding is — see this as a positive step forward for their communities and for the people of the North.

The one significant change that I had mentioned earlier, the criminal record checks, this is a positive step forward. But at the same time, as I'd indicated earlier, why is not the same level of concern there for southern municipalities, for those of us who have provincial responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, and for those from Saskatchewan quite frankly that have national responsibilities in elected life?

I think we should always lead by example as politicians, provincial politicians. We should not impose upon somebody a standard that we wouldn't want imposed upon ourselves. And I think that we should move with due haste, Mr. Speaker, if the members of the government cabinet are listening, to make it a criteria that all members of the provincial legislature also have to have criminal record checks. And if such, Mr. Speaker, have a criminal history or have been convicted of a criminal offence, that should be disclosed to the people of Saskatchewan for the simple reason that a criminal record should not necessarily

exclude you from elected life, but I do think the public has a right to know and understand that, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disturbed that we would move, putting a criteria in northern Saskatchewan which are largely northern communities, are led by leaders of northern communities, but are largely of either Aboriginal or Métis history and ancestry, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And my concern is, why there and not across all of Saskatchewan? Why would we want to include a criteria for northern communities that we wouldn't be prepared to include for all communities in Saskatchewan? But most importantly, why would we want to impose a law or a restriction upon people in northern Saskatchewan we wouldn't and we don't seem to be prepared to impose upon ourselves?

Mr. Speaker, I'm a firm believer that governments need to lead by example. We as legislators need to lead by example. We need to set an example for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. So I do urge the government to bring forward an amendment to *The Election Act* requiring each and every one of us to have a criminal record check, Mr. Speaker, and that we should have to in fact disclose those . . . that information should be disclosed to the public.

Mr. Speaker, many, many people in Saskatchewan seem to have an interest in the fact that we are moving the criminal record checks for northern municipalities and not for all municipal officials in the province as well as provincial officials. I think I've spoken at some detail on this particular issue. And as I've indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, I encourage the government to bring forward an amendment to *The Election Act* immediately to bring in criminal record checks for all elected officials in the provincial jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, whether it be members of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, or for that matter, members of municipal government.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated very early, this piece of legislation in general is supported by the majority of municipal leaders in northern Saskatchewan. It is a significant rewrite. I fully expect to see each of the next several years the minister responsible for Municipal Government bringing forward amendments.

Any time you have a significant rewrite of this nature, it's just about an annual occurrence that there be some amendments made to either correct oversights in the initial major rewrite or to, as you put a piece of legislation into practice, to make amendments that in fact better and improve the legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've spent a fair amount of time speaking on this particular Bill. I notice that I have many of my colleagues with a great deal of interest to speak to legislation that is yet before us, Mr. Speaker. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think it's now appropriate that this particular Bill be moved to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Municipal Affairs that Bill No. 110, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009* be now read a second

time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I designate that Bill No. 110, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009* be referred to the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice committee.

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 Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to enter into debate on Bill No. 111 today for a number of reasons. The Bill itself is essentially a . . . provides consequential amendments. But what they've done is they've put the cart before the horse here, Mr. Speaker, because the consequential amendments that they're proposing are for Bills that aren't passed. And so in a manner that has become custom for the Saskatchewan Party, they are putting forward consequential amendments to legislation that they have no idea whether it will be passed or not. But nobody should ought to be surprised, nobody should ought to be surprised at that.

Now what this does essentially, is makes amendments to three different Acts. And those three Acts include *The Interpretation Act* to replace references to *The Northern Municipalities Act* with *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*.

Now I suppose that there would be some folks who would quibble with some of the finer points of the legislation. But in effect the real issue is whether the legislation passed, making changes that make northern municipalities similar to southern municipalities. And we think in essence that that's a good, a good thing to do.

Now certainly there are some issues with the legislation. And those issues are, well, maybe small to some, or very big issues to others because if you look at one of the Acts that it's amending, it's *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*, and in that Act it's asking for municipalities in northern Saskatchewan to be allowed to place restrictions on elections, and those restrictions are with respect to criminal record checks. Now I

think that, well that's an interesting and laudable goal, and you know perhaps we would applaud that in theory.

What's happened in this case is that this government has chosen to exclude provincial politicians or prospective provincial politicians from that process. And I would argue in this case that what is good for the goose certainly should be good for the gander. If you want to allow a municipality in the North to force a criminal record check before running for public office, maybe that should be something that we should consider for all provincial prospective elected officials, and so you would have a situation where anybody that runs and wins a nomination for a provincial political party to run in the next provincial election in November of 2011 would have to undergo the same criteria that somebody running for the mayor of Ile-a-la-Crosse or the mayor of La Ronge would have to undertake.

And I think that, you know, in essence it seems only fair that if you would force these changes or force these criteria on municipal politicians in northern Saskatchewan, that you would also do that to politicians who would seek to serve at the provincial level. Certainly I think that that would be something that we would want to undertake.

Additionally the government has chosen to limit disclosure to criminal convictions. And so I would question in this Bill, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendment Act*, Bill No. 111, why you would stop there? If you're making reference and making changes to Bill 110 because of 111, why would you stop at limiting disclosure to criminal convictions instead of requiring disclosure on somebody who may have been charged with a serious criminal offence but charges have yet to proceed to court?

Now there's certainly an argument can be made that that would be a reasonable thing to do. And so I think it's a little strange that you would have a provincial government who would propose changes to the law in Saskatchewan that would require a certain level of scrutiny for municipal politicians and northern — specifically in this case northern politicians — when they don't require those same level of scrutiny on the provincial level. And so I would propose that we certainly consult and determine whether or not it should be a requirement.

Now speaking of consultation, like I'd said, the Bill No. 111 affects three other Acts. And I'm certainly curious as to who has been consulted on this Bill because the record of the Saskatchewan Party government on consultation is frankly abysmal.

You need look no further than question period today and news from all of last week where you have municipalities who say that they weren't consulted at all when it comes to Dutch elm disease control programs. You've got experts in the field who will contend that they weren't consulted. And while a \$500,000 reduction might not seem like a bunch of money on a 10.1-or-so billion dollar budgetary expense, certainly I think that the city of Regina would argue that with the 60,000 American elm trees in this city, that it's a vital program for them. And I would tend to agree with that.

Now additionally with some budgetary cuts that they've made in Prince Albert, they hadn't consulted in Prince Albert either.

They cut programs, including \$165,000 from a community development program, and when I called and talked to the folks who run the program, they say they weren't consulted at all.

[16:30]

And so I wouldn't be surprised that on Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act*, that there was no consultation on this Act either because again the list of a lack of consultation is what I would call lengthy. And another place that was borne out — certainly again because this is dealing with municipalities, and we're asking about consultation — if you ask municipalities how much consultation took place with respect to the 1 per cent of PST, I think they'll argue that there was very little consultation on the decision to break their promise to provide one point of the PST to municipalities. And so their history with consultation generally, but specifically as it relates to municipalities, is also I would argue rather lacking.

There are certainly many other examples. If you would talk to different school boards throughout the province, they would certainly argue that with respect to educational assistants and the work that they do in support of the students in Saskatchewan. They do a wonderful job. I've had the great privilege of working in the school system in Prince Albert for a couple of different years, specifically with educational assistants, and they do a tremendous job. In fact if you ask the teachers in whose classrooms they work, they would say that they would be virtually lost without them.

And so it is again a lack of consultation that we're talking about here and need to discern whether or not they've had proper consultation on Bill No. 111. So with that said, certainly we're interested in asking a good number of questions in committee on this Bill. And so I would move at this point to move this Bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Municipal Affairs that Bill 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I designate that Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009* be moved to the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice committee.

Bill No. 127

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Harrison that **Bill No. 127 — *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2009*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to comment on Bill 127, *An Act to amend the Assessment Management Agency Act*. I note with interest that some of the amendments, some of the proposed changes are structural and some of the changes are housekeeping, but some of them are more disturbing, and of course then more interesting.

The SAMA — as we know this agency by, Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency — it does provide a valuable role in assessing property in our province for the purpose of taxation, so everybody watches to see what their assessment is. And it is a very thorny issue, and they make very tough decisions at this table. And I know it's very difficult. Some of the meetings are difficult, and the professionals that sit on SAMA are very . . . They do their job well. And they're also representative of a great, good portion of the people who have interest in this Act.

When I was on the legislative instruments committee of the NDP government, which is the oversight committee for all legislation, we had this Act in front of us many times. And one time, I mentioned that we don't have anybody on SAMA who actually has independent or private sector appraiser background and that was rectified. Now in the new proposal that I see, I don't see — when there's a change in the composition of the board taking it down from its current number down to 11 — I don't see how that type of representation would occur on this board. I see that there'll be two persons nominated by SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and two persons nominated by SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], two provincial government members, and a board Chair who is also appointed by the provincial government following consultation with SUMA and SARM. So it's going from the current 11-member board down to 7. So I'm wondering which, particularly which four, are not going to be represented.

And I have a feeling that we aren't going to see the representation from the private sector appraisers who actually do a lot of work in the province and actually have a feeling for what appraisals are and what they should be. So I'm concerned about that. I don't know if there's been any consultation with the Appraisal Institute and the Saskatchewan branch to see how they see this happening, and if it is true that they are not going to be represented, the loss that this will bring to the integrity of the board.

And also, speaking of the integrity of the board, I noted the

minister's comments in his second reading speech which says, ". . . this Bill proposes to strengthen government's role related to assessment policy making and help to ensure future decisions are consistent with provincial goals and priorities." That was exactly my worry, that we were seeing this change in the composition of this board to do exactly this, to basically do the government's bidding. And it does raise alarm bells with me and should with other people in the province that it isn't simply adjusting the number of people on the board and how they meet and things like that, that are fairly innocuous. But it does — especially when the minister's quite clear that this is going to strengthen government's role in this — it smacks of real government interference.

And given the recent discussions that have occurred in this House and out around the role of the Chief Electoral Officer and government's interference of the hiring of that official who should be very independent of government, I have a real concern that this will also, this does signify loss of independence for this board.

And it does speak to our system of democracy. And I think people are quite . . . I wouldn't say comfortable with an assessment agency; it's sort of a necessary evil. But I think it's alarming if the government has an agenda that they intend to put through using this committee. And I don't think people on the committee would feel comfortable knowing that that was what their job was going to be when they were assigned to this committee.

I noticed today we have accepted the retirement notification of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Provincial Auditor. That does again raise alarms with me that we seem to see a trend here, and I worry about what process we will have in place to replace those individuals who do such a wonderful job protecting democracy of this province.

Any changes that we do make to SAMA shouldn't be taken lightly and especially, like I said, if the government has said — and the minister was quite clear — that this will make the agency more in line with the government's goals. That does certainly suggest to me that there will be a fair amount of interference.

And from my role as Health critic, I certainly have seen the change in the health boards that were directly appointed by this government when it took over in '07. In Saskatoon we have spent over two years trying to get a meeting with the Saskatoon Health Board. That never happened before. The Saskatoon Health Board was open to both the government and opposition to discuss issues that are of interest to all sides and all people in Saskatoon. I worry that that's the type of control that we will see on many different boards.

I know when the Harper government was elected, friends of mine who served on committees said that there was a marked change in how the work of committees were done in the federal parliament, that there was no more attention to democracy, due process, the work of the committee, the obligation of opposition to have scrutiny and accountability and transparency. That was gone. So I worry about this when the minister has said directly that that is what his intent is. That should be a red flag for everyone.

I have not seen any indication that this government consults people in any meaningful way. Everywhere we turn, there are regulations put in place like the changes to HIPA that were made that allow the government and the health district to let our names and addresses go out to fundraisers. Absolutely appalling. People are stunned and shocked by this. I sat on the first board of the Saskatchewan Health Information Network, and I was also the minister that brought in HIPA in its original form, *The Health Information Protection Act*. So I know that the public is very worried about their information and how it is used. Obviously we've seen 92 per cent of them said no, do not do this. Put an end to this. Stop doing it. Don't talk to us about this anymore.

So I think that when we talk about consultation and due process, I think people don't, they don't trust the government anymore to have followed through on this. So I think that this is another place we will want to find out exactly who was spoken to about these changes. What impact do they have on their organizations and what exactly they said in response to these changes? And I'm especially interested in the changes of the board members and how they're appointed, and the direction that the government has obviously already stated of how this agency will be functioning, and that is basically at the behest of government with, it sounds like, direct interference.

And we don't know exactly how SAMA will be funded into the future. There is some indication that the funding will flow through the Ministry of Finance, where it formally came through Education. And of course some of the changes are initiated or come from, flow from the changes to the inability of school boards to now levy changes to the mill rates. They have no ability to tax anymore. So there is obviously some changes that have to be made to the assessment agency to reflect the fact that the school boards have no authority or power over the money that they are getting, which is a whole other conversation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we don't know whether the money that was going into the education system will now come, the same amount of money will come to SAMA. We don't know that. That would be a question that would of course be asked. When there is only four board members taken off, I can't see that that would make a huge difference in the funding of the agency, the work that they do from the financial aspect. My questions still remain: what authority will they have and what interference will the government do?

The school boards of course are worried where their funding is coming from, and people will of course be wondering about the assessment on their property. Where will the money go from the assessment? What will happen to their assessments, and what will the assessments be actually used for? How will levies be set to fund education and other things that the assessment numbers are used for?

And SAMA, as I said at the beginning, is a group of very professional individuals, and they have worked hard. I know we've had them appear before us in committee, in the legislative instruments committee, and they take their job very seriously. An assessment is never a very popular thing. People do have appeals. That's something that's available. You can appeal your assessment and there are many who do. And that

job is difficult too because people do not have sometimes the same view as the agency has for their assessment on their property. And they do attend difficult meetings and of course have to answer those difficult questions that people come forward with when their assessment does not meet with what their expectations were.

[16:45]

Now I'm not sure if all the members that are going to be appointed . . . when I said that we were talking about how the different members will appear on the committee, how they will be actually chosen. There will be two persons of course nominated by SUMA. We can see that happening through their organization and the same with SARM. But two provincial government members, where will they be coming from? Will they be from the bureaucracy from within the departments, or will they be someone whose name is submitted, say, on behalf of the Appraisal Institute and maybe the chambers of commerce or someone else who has an interest in this sort of thing? And the Chairs also? So three out of the seven members will be directly appointed by government, and that includes the Chair. So that does raise a huge concern about the impartiality, the independence, and the effectiveness then of the board.

Now some of the things I said were definitely going to be housekeeping because they're taking out any reference to the boards of education, the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], all that sort of thing has come out because there is no longer any attachment to the SSBA and the mill rates or taxes which are based on assessments.

So we definitely see . . . I know that there are certainly problems with assessment. As I said, there is an appeal process that people get to use, and there are some legitimate concerns. And assessments are not always accurate. They do have some small errors. But my main concern is still the consultation. What has been done to talk to people about this legislation, how it will affect them, and for sure how will it affect the independence of the committee and the actual democratic process of how the committee or how the agency will work?

Like I said, at the committee level, there has been already some indication about how the committees will function as recent as last week with *The Tobacco Control Act* coming to the Human Services committee. It was quite a fiasco, for want of a better word. Amendments came to the committee without having scrutiny not only from the Clerks and the Assembly but from the opposition. We never saw them, as opposition members. So there is a lack of commitment to due process, and there's a lack of commitment to transparency and accountability. And it was unfortunate — or fortunate, depending on how you look at it — that there was a group of stakeholders that were concerned about *The Tobacco Control Act* in the room to witness how this worked. And they knew ahead of time that there was some difficulty moving the Act through the House, as there was some issues at the House level of how legislation will be moved through in this session.

There has been a lack of consultation between the government and the opposition. There has been a lack of accountability and transparency between the opposition and government. And so there has been some difficulty from the point of view of people,

the stakeholders from the tobacco Act, of how this would affect their Act. Well there's a fundamental belief that those amendments in the tobacco Act were needed and so it would move forward. But the way it moved forward is, if that is the norm of how legislation will be moved through from now on, it will be much more difficult.

I'm sure . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know if you can hear me, but I can hardly hear myself. There's a lot of chatter going on.

I think that at the committee level we don't, we cannot see Bills come to the committee level without the correct amount of time to oversee what's going on, to ask questions of the changes and what they mean to the agencies or the organizations that they will affect. And I don't think, it's certainly not fair to the opposition members who are there with the job of doing due diligence, with the job of doing oversight of different Bills and the intentions of the things that are coming through.

There was a clear lack of respect for the staff as well in how the committee was conducted, where none of us were prepared. And I don't know what message that was to send to the stakeholders and to the viewing public, but I do know that when the minister says in his remarks that this Bill proposes to strengthen the government's role related to assessment policy making and help to ensure that future decisions are consistent with provincial goals and priorities, that doesn't sound like something that's going to be open and transparent. It sounds like that's going to be directed, and when you talk about direction, you talk about interference.

And I think people have seen that that is definitely what some of the things that have been happening lately indicate. And like I said, I think that the outstanding issue of the appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer is something that people really do worry about.

And then when Bills like this come forward, and there are changes made that don't necessarily have a good explanation, and have remarks covered in second reading by the minister that actually lead us to more worry than to be comfortable with how these things are going, then you do need to have a strong committee presence to deal with the questions that arise, to deal with the feedback from the stakeholders. And the consultation process in general has to be, has to be rigorous.

I mean some things are housekeeping, but some things will have a cause and effect and will ripple through the system. And we don't, I don't have any confidence — and I don't think very many people do anymore — of this government making decisions that look at cause and effect. The things that I've seen, that I have seen up to this point, have been made with basically a knee-jerk kind of reaction, very little forethought. And I think people are starting to see that and certainly come forward and say that.

So there is more then, there is then a more defined onus on the opposition to actually do the proper scrutiny. So we do have to have . . . There's several, there's a lot of changes being made in this, and we can't exactly say that all of it is only housekeeping and all of it will be very minor. It's not going to happen.

There is all kinds of things that will see things changed that will be, I think, will probably be technical. And that won't really have a lot of impact on people, nor will they need to really know some of those details. But there are things that will change, and that is certainly the things about the actual composition of the board. I think that would be of grave concern to people who don't see their issues represented and also to see the level of government control or interference.

I don't know what the SSBA says. I don't know what's left for them to say, given that they have pretty much been stripped of all authority or ability to enter into the assessment or the tax debate. So we have some changes obviously proposed here in the funding of the SAMA board because currently the Act has said that there's 40 per cent of SAMA's funding coming from education and 30 per cent on behalf of school divisions and the municipalities to provide 30 per cent.

So those targets apparently have not been reached. But what will we see now of how the share will be, that the shares from government will be 65 and the municipal share will be 35. This says it's going to reflect the actual current funding relationship, but we don't know how SAMA, how SUMA and SARM do feel about this. It doesn't . . . We don't know if that's fair or in their opinion, is it fair. And so we do have to have that conversation.

We have to ask the minister when he comes with his officials before the committee to explain what all of it means, in light of his disturbing remarks, what this means to this board and its efficiency and effectiveness and its ability to have the public trust in its work. We don't see that this is . . . I don't see any . . . Of course we don't get the Bill with any idea of who's been consulted. So that will be something that we definitely have to look at.

We also need to look at how the funding is done. How do we look at northern municipalities, how things will change in regard to that. And how SAMA . . . All these acronyms, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they do not tend to roll off the tongue that easily.

We do have existing provisions that are changing around funding which seems to be complicated, so we will likely want to definitely have a good discussion on what those changes will mean and how SAMA will be funded, hopefully that it will be funded enough and effectively to do its job. And we don't know that for sure either. The issues around the education portion, the education connection to SAMA are also the things we need talk about because there's a whole bunch of issues around what happens because they're removed.

Then what changes to the municipality will be made when the school boards have been removed totally from the equation? What onus is there on the municipalities, both rural and urban, what onus is on them to pay? What onus is on them to . . . What type of person do they put on the board and what type of oversight do they have because this will affect them directly.

So we do need to see, and we also need to see if there's been any change in the appeal process because we do have a fairly solid appeal process which I understand is being used quite regularly. So will that change at all? And will there be any

changes obviously too to the authority of any of the municipal officials or the assessors and inspectors? Is any of this going to change in this Act that will affect how people's property is accessed? And that's a question too we will have to ask.

So we do have, in the current Act we now require assessment appraisers to obtain permission prior to going onto the property to conduct evaluation. The new provision requires reasonable effort to give notice. Well I don't know where reasonable effort is defined, but I'm sure we'll have to find out what that means.

And SAMA is concerned about trespass, of course, if prior notice hasn't been given or private permission has not been given. So we need to have certainly a conversation about what this means and what does it do to SAMA's ability to actually do its work if there is no ability to get hold of people or access their property.

We do have some, also some ability for of course the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations. And we all do want to know about regulations because regulations are really quite concerning about details of what happens. A lot of times, the things that you may not like or may not want to see appear in regulation, and there really is very little opportunity for oversight or scrutiny of regulations. They just appear on the order in council and there they are. So we would want to find out what exactly, when you're giving the powers to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations, what do you actually anticipate being in regulations, and how do you see it changing if you see any changes?

There are changes that will affect *The Cities Act* of course, and that is legislation that we continue to see being changed and amended and strengthened. We want to see how this will affect *The Cities Act* and that we will have questions to ask about their appraisals. And definitely in the explanation about this change, about how the appeal board decisions in future years, not just current years, we want to make sure they've not changed. And there's issues around that and the changes to market value.

There's also changes to disclosure of evidence, and this of course would be talking to the appeal board as well as the board of revision. And so we want to ask questions about that on what exactly the onus will be on the assessor or the assessment appraiser and what type of decisions will be left to the board. And I'm not sure the appeal board, since I don't have the whole Act in front me, I'm not sure who sits on the appeal board. But again, given the minister's remarks in the second reading speech that this will better reflect the government's role relating to policy making, I'm a little disturbed that that might also affect the appeal process, and that people will not have an independent appeal process that they feel may be fair or would be fair, given that the government will be basically sort of reviewing itself.

People don't have much confidence in that. They like to see an independent review and then have some confidence that this will be fair to them. So I don't think that, I don't see that actually here because I don't know who's going to be on the appeal board and if the role of the appeal board will change around the assessments and around the composition or around their authority. So we don't know that for sure.

Not only *The Cities Act* is affected, but also *The Municipalities Act* and *The Northern Municipalities Act*. So there will be some consequential amendments to all of those Acts to ensure that assessor and assessment appraisers consider applying appeal board decisions into future years. That is something that will be interesting to have explained.

The Deputy Speaker: — This House now stands in recess until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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