



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

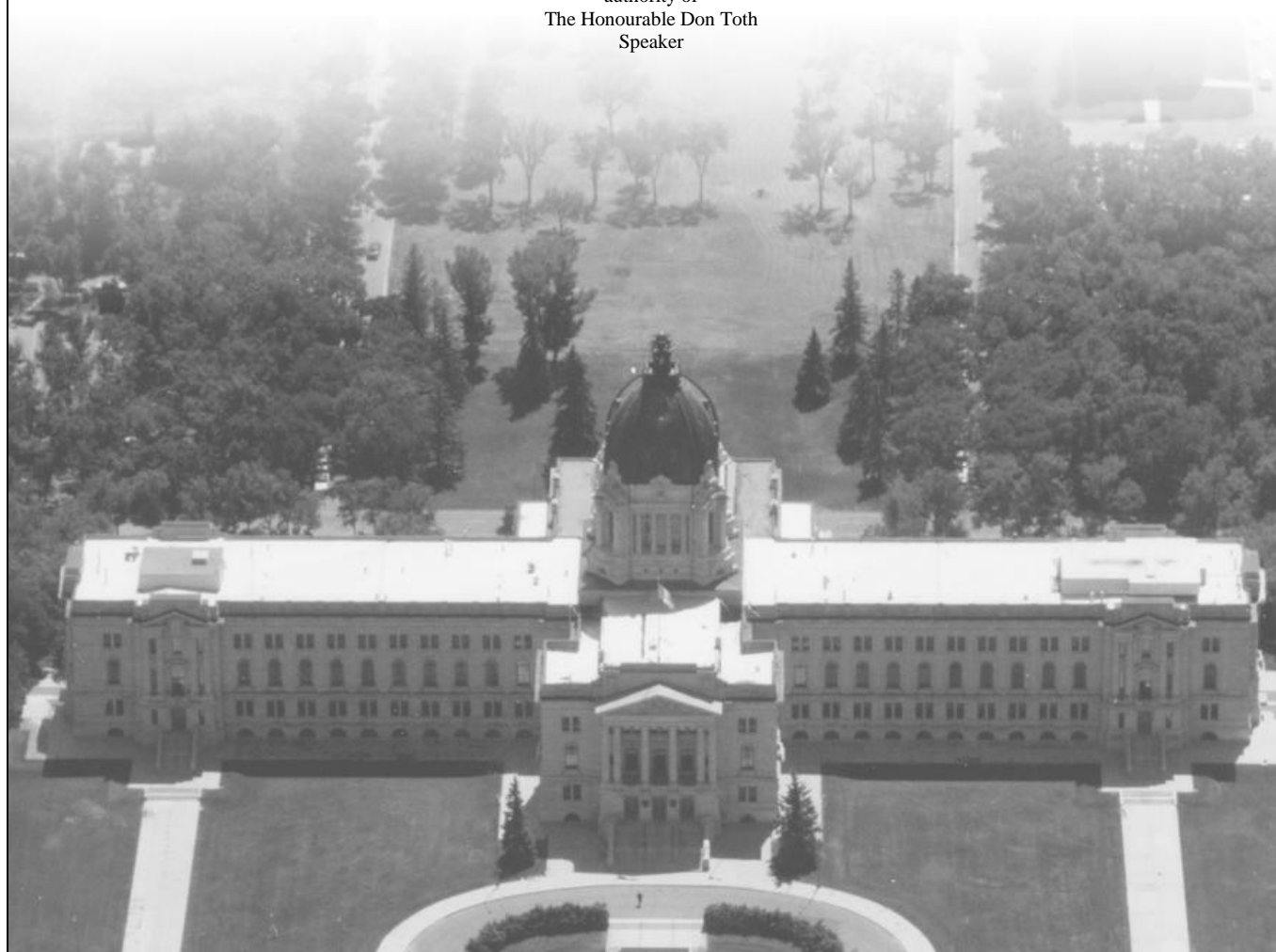
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
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
Broten, 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
Gantefoer, 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, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. 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
Lingenfelter, Dwain	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. 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, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, 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
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
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:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask leave of members of the Assembly to make an extended introduction this afternoon.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to hon. members for leave to make a special introduction of guests who have joined us in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, I think it was Mark Twain that famously said that everyone complains about the weather and nobody does anything about it. Mr. Speaker, the group that I'm about to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly and to the province are . . . They can't do anything about the weather themselves, but when weather strikes, as it did this spring in our province, they are there for Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, we all know this spring and summer was one of the most devastating in terms of weather in Saskatchewan in terms of the history of our province. Whether it was the flooding in Maple Creek and area, in the RM [rural municipality] of Maple Creek as well, or the flooding in Yorkton and area or the flooding that hit farmers so hard in the east central and northeast part of the province or the flooding in Saskatoon or the tornado at Kawacatoose or the flooding in North Battleford, it was quite, quite a strange year for the province and more importantly a very difficult year for communities and for Saskatchewan people who were dealing with flooding.

Mr. Speaker, the guests in the gallery today are representing a number of ministries. Though they are from Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, Mr. Speaker, though they are from the fire commissioner's office and we also have folks from the Red Cross, they are here to represent civil servants, public service members across government and in the Crown corporations and social services, in Highways and in the various Crowns that responded to the flooding that was going on, responded to help people in Saskatchewan when they needed the help the most.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of the people in your gallery and those that they represent gave up vacation time, they gave up personal time, they gave up family events and family reunions in order that they could respond, in order that they could be there for the people of the province to provide disaster assistance.

They've been working, Mr. Speaker, to make sure even today that the provincial disaster assistance program is delivered for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. They're on the front lines, reporting back to government as to how we can improve the provincial disaster assistance program to help more people and help them in a more meaningful way. And that input, by the way, is continuing today.

Mr. Speaker, there were 4,353 private claims under the provincial disaster assistance program, 68 municipal claims; 2,976 payments already made, Mr. Speaker, 509 files already completely closed, \$10.7 million already paid out, 200 municipalities who have been designated as eligible for disaster assistance.

Behind the numbers though are Saskatchewan people who are out of their homes, who are displaced, who needed a helping hand, and we salute the local governments in each of these communities today. We salute the local First Nation at Kawacatoose. We salute, Mr. Speaker, those who responded, the front-line emergency responders in those communities as we honour those in your gallery today from CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing].

So, Mr. Speaker, I would, with the indulgence of the Assembly, like to read into the record the names of those who are here because, Mr. Speaker, they deserve to be honoured and thanked for their public service that's ongoing with respect to the disaster assistance. So if I may quickly . . . And I'm going to go through the list pretty quickly and I apologize in advance for maybe some mispronunciations. But if those of our guests wish to give a wave, they're certainly welcome to do that.

In attendance is the deputy minister, Al Hilton; the ADM [assistant deputy minister], Mae Boa; Tom Young, executive director; Deana Carter Keller, Noel McAvena, Tamie Folwark, Janet Gangl, Stacey Ostepchuk, Leisha Grant, Tracy Hodel, Elizabeth Parks, Carmen Schimmers, Correen Nagy, Rachel Brown, Renu James, Dean Marcia, Carol Juhlin, Rosanne Jayawardena, Lisa Flodell, Michelle Chalus, Sheila Clark, Kelly Lima, Crystal Dirksen, Tamara Miki, Randa Tyndale, Mieka Torgrimson from Sask EMO [Emergency Measures Organization]. The first group was from PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program], Mr. Speaker.

From building standards, Bill Hawkins, Paul Cook, Margaret Ball, Len Semko; from the office of the fire commissioner, Duane McKay, Yvette Wright, Greg Reeves, Randy Backlund, Duane Hiebert, Larry Zadvorny. And, Mr. Speaker, from CPSP communications, Desirae Bernreuther. And also from the Red Cross, who were great in responding and working with our local municipalities and the officials at CPSP, from the Red Cross, Cindy Fuchs and Rod Orr have joined us.

Mr. Speaker, the work continues in terms of processing claims. We know there's been significant improvements made to that program. More help is being provided. But today we wanted to just say to the people that have gathered together in the legislature today, in their legislature, thank you on behalf of a grateful province for what they did over and above the call of duty and as a part of their service to the people of Saskatchewan. And we welcome them to their Legislative

Assembly as well.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to join with the Premier, and I imagine the minister in a few minutes, in thanking the many, many civil servants who have served your province with great skill and dedication over the last several months.

This year without doubt has been a challenge for many, many families in the province, but through your hard work that challenge has been made easier for many, many families. You provided hope. You provided clarity. You provided direction when many of these families needed that very touch of hope that they could look towards the future.

I think, as the Premier indicated, more than 200 municipalities affected. Communities that were devastated: Maple Creek, Yorkton, North Battleford, Saskatoon. Many farmers who saw their yards totally flooded.

Across this province this was a year that many are going to remember for the devastation and the impact upon their lives. And you made a difference. You were there to help people. You gave up your vacations. Many of you stayed for weeks away from your families and away from home. And that is the true meaning of being a dedicated professional civil servant working for the people of the province.

And as a result of that dedication and hard work on your part, families are better off today. And people who thought that maybe things weren't going to look so great tomorrow have a little bit of hope that the future is not so bleak. Now, Mr. Speaker, there's always more that any program can do or more that any of us would like to have been able to do. But we can only do the best we can, and under very trying circumstances you performed over and above the call of duty. You presented for the people of this province an opportunity for hope and a future that they can look forward to.

So on behalf of the official opposition and the members of this Assembly, we'd like to thank you for your dedication, hard work, and for your commitment to our province and our future. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety.

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Premier and the member from Dewdney in recognizing and saying a thank you to all of the guests that we have with us today. I had the opportunity to speak with them at lunch and offered my comments about the outstanding work that they have done during the summer months and ongoing to this day.

We did an awful lot of changes to the program, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of the ideas came from the women and men that you see sitting in the gallery today. But they responded. When we decided on a change from listening to what the people of the province had to say, these folks responded, and it created an

extra workload for them. But they really responded in kind and put the best foot forward and responded to what the needs of the people were.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to, on behalf of CPSP and all of the members here, just say a warm thank you to all of the members and to our Red Cross friends who have done so much to help out in the disasters this summer. So I would like to ask all members to join with me in thanking the folks that we have visiting today.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — The member from Prince Albert Carlton has asked for leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave's granted. I recognize the member for Prince Albert Carlton.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today, it's my pleasure to introduce through you and to you to all members of the legislature, Mr. Ken Engel. Can you give us a wave, Ken.

Ken began his career as executive director with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] in 1995 where he began dedicating countless hours to help make rural Saskatchewan what it is today. Newly retired, Ken joins us today, and I had the privilege of taking a few moments over the lunch hour to acknowledge his contributions to our great province, and today here.

I'm reminded of Winston Churchill's simple quote that is, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." Ken has given much. He's a gentleman and a statesman. And he has shown boundless energy in gaining consensus with municipalities and, when needed, in pushing the provincial, federal, and municipal governments alike to become more creative, more dynamic in our collective work.

In recent times, Ken helped the municipal sector and our government develop the historic new revenue-sharing agreement between the province and the municipalities. He's been a strong advocate for SARM and a champion for municipal government. Earlier today on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and Municipal Affairs, I presented Ken with a framed portrait of the Legislative Building in appreciation for his commitment to our work together and for his work for Saskatchewan people.

I invite all members to welcome Mr. Engel to his Legislative Assembly and join me in thanking him for service to our province. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the minister and offer Ken Engel a warm welcome to the legislature. Mr. Speaker, much like the bureaucrats and the civil servants that are in the gallery today, Mr. Engel served that role with SARM for many years, brought a very level head and a calm voice to many, many meetings, always was very persistent in putting forward his views but always spoke well and had the best interests at heart of the people that he represented at SARM.

Mr. Speaker, I was a little sad when I heard Mr. Engel was going to retire this year. But I think, like all members in the Assembly, I would wish him well. Enjoy retirement; it's well deserved. And welcome this afternoon. Good to see you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, thank you. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce some of Saskatchewan's best and brightest graduate students. They're from the University of Regina, and they're recipients of tri-council graduate scholarships, Mr. Speaker. They're joined today by Dr. Blachford, the associate dean of Graduate Studies and Research from the University of Regina, and Wendy Machmer who's the manager of graduate scholarships and awards from the University of Regina.

The students are: Katherine McMillan, a doctoral student in psychology and who's doing some work on some key areas of anxiety management and related areas of physiology; as well, June Zimmer who's a doctoral student in kinesiology and health studies and she's recently been awarded a CIHR [Canadian Institutes of Health Research] grant; Vanessa Phillips who has been awarded an NSERC [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada] grant focusing on some key areas of water quality.

Mamata Pandey is a doctoral student in experiential psychology, focusing on cognitive aspects of development; Adam Dube, a doctoral student who's working with children's academic and cognitive development; Amber Fletcher who's doing work at the doctoral level in Canadian Plains Studies, looking at the role of women in changing communities across our province and beyond.

Lindsay Friesen is a master's student who's also been awarded a CIHR grant. Omeed Ghandehari is a master's student focusing on physiology, doing some work with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. Myriah Mulvogue is a master's student who is working on some preventative violence initiatives and has received a CIHR grant; Marc Beal, a master's student who's been awarded an NSERC grant working on some key indicators within mice, and obviously in this era of zoonotic diseases we understand the significance there.

[13:45]

And Krista Baird who is now Krista Allen, just recently married, is a master's student who has been awarded a SSHRC [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council] grant for qualitative studies on intercultural dialogue and connectivity across our province and well beyond.

We'd like to offer our sincere congratulations and thanks to these students. They offer examples of inspiration and inclusion for all of us, both within the academic realm and right across our community.

And if I could, Mr. Speaker, I would add two additional names, no strangers to this House. Kyle Addison who is the student president of the University of Regina and a tireless worker. With him is Matt Steen, vice-president finance, serving the students at the University of Regina.

To all these students, to our graduate students and to the undergraduate student leaders and to those with them today, we want to say on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan, behalf of their government, thank you for your work; thank you for your inspiration. And we are certainly encouraged in the work that's under way and wish you all the best in your academic and professional endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask all members of the Assembly to join me in offering this welcome and congratulations.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister in welcoming these graduate students to the Assembly today, along with faculty and student leaders who are here.

It's very encouraging and inspiring to hear the varied fields of study that are planned. I want to congratulate all the students on receiving these awards, and I know you'll do our province very proud as you pursue your academic endeavours. So on behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to welcome you to the legislature and congratulate you once again. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature I would like to welcome 23 grade 11 students from my hometown of Kelvington, Saskatchewan. Obviously we have a group of very attractive and intelligent people with us today and with their teacher, Jim Lissinna, who I assure you has been very dedicated when it comes to bringing his group to the legislature every year. And afterwards we have an opportunity to discuss what's happening, and they ask some tough questions. And I really appreciate your insight and your knowledge when it comes to the workings of our legislature. So I ask all members to join with me in welcoming the grade 11 students to their legislature.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to all the members of the Legislative Assembly two ladies that are sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, two individuals who have travelled from Kindersley, which is the home of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to the members Kathy Strutt who is the

general manager, and Bonnie St. John who is the administrative assistant. And I'd ask all members to welcome these two individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to reciprocate on this side of the . . . for the opposition here and welcome the two administrators here, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. We welcome them to their Assembly and we welcome their work that they provide to Saskatchewan people on a daily basis on this important issue of income security, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the east gallery I'd like to introduce a constituent and friend of mine, Mr. Stuart Busse. He is a lawyer in Biggar, and I'd like to welcome him here to his Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also want to welcome the grad students in the University of Regina. But I also want to welcome Dongyan Blachford to the Assembly.

In 2006 I had the opportunity to go on a trip with the University of Regina to China, and we were recruiting international students. And Dongyan was with us and accompanied us on that trip. She is a superb, a superb ambassador for the people of our province when it comes to China. And I know that she is doing wonderful work at the University of Regina. And I also want to welcome her to the Assembly this afternoon.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by over 150 Saskatchewan residents who wish to bring to our attention the following: that the Saskatchewan Seniors Association has approximately 180 seniors' centres throughout the province, many of them in rural Saskatchewan; that these centres provide much-needed recreation and social activities as well as important health clinics and workshops which contribute to an enhanced quality of life for many of the seniors who use them; and that due to the skyrocketing costs of utilities, insurance, taxes, etc., approximately one quarter of these centres may close within the next few months; and that the closure of these centres will lead to the deteriorating mental and physical health of seniors, which will lead to additional stress on long-term care facilities and hospitals:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to provide the much-needed funding to assist seniors' recreation centres to remain open and active within their communities.

And these signatures are from the communities of Foam Lake, Sheho, Ituna, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Regina, Strasbourg, Lanigan, Jansen, and Asquith. I so present.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to rise and present a petition in support of eliminating poverty in Saskatchewan. And we know that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations that all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. And we know that citizens living in poverty have long identified affordable solutions such as the recent national and provincial initiatives, including the Saskatoon health disparities report and the Canada Without Poverty Dignity for All campaign. They call for a comprehensive poverty elimination strategy that includes income, food, and housing security. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing the petition come from the cities of Regina and 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 calls for the expansion of the graduate retention program and a call for fairness for post-secondary Saskatchewan students. The prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the city of Regina and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Hi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present another petition regarding Furdale. And the situation in Furdale is that they're looking for a permanent solution rather than another delay of what the decision is going to be. A government ministry has directed SaskWater to cut off supplies for water for domestic use to Furdale customers. The government ministry has directed that customers may no longer treat non-potable water using methods approved by Sask Health.

The Furdale residents, in dealing in good faith with SaskWater for over 30 years, have paid large amounts for their domestic

systems and in-home treatment equipment as well as for livestock and irrigation lines; and that the alternative water supply being referred to by a government ministry is a private operator offering treated, non-pressurized water at great cost with no guarantee of quality, quantity, or availability of water. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to withdraw its order to cut off non-potable water to the residents of the hamlet of Furdale, causing great hardship with no suitable alternatives; to exempt the hamlet of Furdale from further water service cut-offs by granting a grandfather clause under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002* and *The Water Regulations, 2002*; and that this government fulfills its promises to rural Saskatchewan.

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

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

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to our unprecedented mismanagement that we witness from a financial perspective under the Sask Party government. They allude to the two consecutive deficit budgets, the billions of dollars of debt growth, Mr. Speaker — \$4.2 billion alone over the next four years which represents a growth of 55 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And of course this mismanagement and these deficits come at a time of record highs in revenues, Mr. Speaker. And of course they come at a consequence to Saskatchewan people now and into the future. 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 Saskatoon. I so submit.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Food Bank Meets Community Needs

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was with a sense of humility last week that I joined some of my fellow NDP [New Democratic Party] MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and candidates in volunteering with the Regina &

District Food Bank. To volunteer is important at any time of the year, but it always seems to carry extra significance in this season when the weather turns bitter, family budgets get tighter, and as we heard that night, Mr. Speaker, when a growing number of families find it hard to know where their next meal is coming from.

The Regina & District Food Bank supplies 10,000 people with food every month. This figure means that about 5 per cent of Regina's population counts on this organization and its staff and supporters just to put food on the table. And 63 per cent of those forced to rely on the food bank are Aboriginal people. Though the food bank does deserve the highest praise for this work, it's a terribly sad commentary on our society when so many of our neighbours lack the means to adequately feed themselves and their families.

In keeping with the season, Mr. Speaker, the food bank also prepares packages of toys for children, who make up 44 per cent of food bank users. No doubt the toys will be welcome, Mr. Speaker, but the greatest gift we could give these children would be a commitment to eliminate the poverty that sends them to the food bank in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the amazing work done by the Regina & District Food Bank, not just through the holidays but through the whole year.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

#### Public Servants Thanked for Help to Flood Victims

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been spoken about in this Assembly quite a lot lately, but today I will take time to acknowledge the PDAP staff, working tirelessly to help those who were affected by the summer's flooding.

Mr. Speaker, after forming government we realized the shortcomings of the program, but after the flooding hit, even more shortcomings became evident and were quickly addressed. Our government listened to the property owners who were telling us that PDAP was inadequate to meet their needs. Mr. Speaker, when claimants informed us that the deductible amount was too high, that the maximum eligibility levels were low, that the eligibility requirements were too restrictive, our government listened. The ministry also hired additional staff to review files to assist with residents' concerns.

There is certainly more work to be done to further reduce the wait times and improve the program, but good progress has been made.

I ask this Assembly to recognize the efforts of PDAP workers and volunteers. But, Mr. Speaker, volunteers definitely deserve all the credit they get and received and more. However, public servants as a rule are expected to do this as part of the job. But I would disagree, that these public servants went above and beyond what they were called to do.

It is nearly impossible to put into words the appreciation and thankfulness of the government, but more than that, the individuals and families affected by the flood. So simply, Mr.

Speaker, and somewhat inadequately on behalf of Maple Creek, Yorkton, Saskatoon, Kawacatoose, The Battlefords, Hudson Bay, Regina, Carlyle and all points in between, bless you and thank you.

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

### Homelessness in Saskatoon

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the video *Nowhere to Go: Homeless in Saskatoon* was launched at the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre. This video powerfully depicts the challenges too many people face in finding a home in our largest city, Saskatoon.

*Nowhere to Go* tells the stories of homeless individuals, people who society often don't listen to, says Marjorie Beaucage, the project co-ordinator for Passion for Action Against Homelessness. She says these are real people with real lives.

Beaucage was shocked to learn the number of young people who are now on the streets of Saskatoon. And now there are over 400 people at city soup kitchens every day. Each of these individuals represent another 10 who are couch surfing or who are in semi-permanent shelters.

Mr. Speaker, we know the lack of affordable and emergency housing is a growing issue in Saskatoon and throughout our province. The effect of this is to leave those most vulnerable in the most desperate need of housing. We now know that the waiting list for public housing has more than doubled in the last three years with more than 2,300 people — including over 1,000 families and 900 seniors — on the Sask Housing waiting list. Mr. Speaker, we need action and we need action today.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of those who are homeless, I've been asked today to pass on their season greetings to all members of the legislature here with these holiday cards, from our home to yours. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

[14:00]

### Melville Football Coach Honoured

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this year at the Vanier Cup's coaches' dinner, a coach from Melville, Saskatchewan was honoured. John Svenson was recognized as the Home Depot NFL [National Football League] Youth Coach of the Year in Canada.

"John Svenson has had a positive impact on a lot of young football players in the province of Saskatchewan and we're proud to recognize that," said Mike Danischewsky, football development, NFL Canada. "He is a coach who exemplifies everything our award represents: a long-term commitment to coaching that goes beyond the win-loss column and strengthens the sport in his community."

Benny Walchuk, a former player of Coach Svenson's at Melville Comprehensive, submitted the essay nominating his former coach:

John Svenson has been volunteering his time and effort at the school's football program for the past 18 years, coaching, repairing equipment, and keeping the field in shape [said Walchuk]. In the summer months, he helps coach Team Saskatchewan and organizes games with the teams from the United States. If you can find someone that does more for football in their community, then hats off to you, because in my opinion there isn't anyone that does as much as Coach Svenson does for Melville.

The football program at the Melville Comprehensive School will receive \$5,000 in new football equipment as well as a \$1,000 Home Depot gift card for football-related renovation projects such as field repair, fixing bleachers, painting locker rooms, etc.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of the Assembly, I would like to congratulate John on all of his years of hard work and dedication to football in Melville. This honour is well deserved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### African-Canadian Heritage Museum Honourees

**Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, five individuals and three families from The Battlefords have been honoured by the Saskatchewan African-Canadian Heritage Museum. A ceremony to honour Gordon Yarde, Freda Ellis, Roberto Zayas, Don Hodgins, Jane Shury, the Mayes family, the Lane family, and the Works family was held earlier this year in Battleford.

Gordon Yarde was honoured as the first politician of African descent in Saskatchewan. He was first elected to Battleford Town Council in 1985. Freda Ellis was a renowned actress in the 1960s and the first Black to earn her certified nursing assistant's accreditation. Roberto Zayas was a baseball star and a worker with intellectually challenged individuals. Don Hodgins was a high school coach who worked with former NFL rookie of the year, Rueben Mayes. And Jane Shury, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame, was honoured for her efforts to remember the great Black baseball players of Saskatchewan's past.

The Mayes family began with Joseph and Mattie Mayes, who moved out of slavery to Saskatchewan with their 13 children. The Lane family moved to The Battlefords in 1928, and the Russell Works family has seen seven generations living and flourishing in northwest Saskatchewan. More information on the heritage museum can be found at [www.sachm.com](http://www.sachm.com).

I call on all members to join me in congratulating these fine individuals for their recognition by the Saskatchewan African-Canadian Heritage Museum.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Batoche.



### Positive Assessment of Saskatchewan's Health Care System

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent Canadian public opinion poll shed some new light on Saskatchewan's health care system and its relation to other provinces.

The lead paragraph read, "Saskatchewan is the only province where half of the population offers a positive assessment of the current state of health care." Mr. Speaker, in a country that faces significant challenges in delivering universal health care, half our population remains positive about Saskatchewan's system.

Other key findings in this poll reveal that 90 per cent of Saskatchewan's residents had a positive view of their visit to a family doctor or general practitioner. Also, Mr. Speaker, nearly two-thirds of Saskatchewan residents were satisfied with their last visit to a Saskatchewan emergency room.

What this poll tells us, Mr. Speaker, is that Saskatchewan's health care providers deliver top-notch service to our residents. Their expertise, dedication, and professionalism are being recognized by the people of Saskatchewan, which is reflected in this poll. Even though our government has made positive steps in expanding and enhancing health care services throughout the province, we realize there is more work to be done.

On behalf of this House, I would like to congratulate Saskatchewan's health care providers and their delivery of top-notch services to the people of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Saskatchewan's Forgotten People

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, there's a growing list of people in Saskatchewan who feel left out or forgotten by this Sask Party government. Across this province people tell us their daily lives are not reflected in the government's slick advertising campaigns and good news photo ops.

There are renters and seniors on fixed incomes struggling with low vacancy rates and rising rents. There are young parents attending university trying to find affordable child care while their tuition bills rise. There are working families increasingly forced to make ends meet at the end of the month by a trip to the food bank. There are families in rural communities watching health care services reduced, long-term care beds closed, and elderly parents relocated to facilities in strange surroundings far away.

There are northern families waiting for the government to take meaningful action on housing, mental health, addictions, and youth suicide rates. There are children in care who depend for their well-being on the oversight of a government that does not even know how many they are or where they live.

The list of people and families this government has forgotten or left out is already too long. Instead of putting feel-good photo ops and expensive PR [public relations] campaigns at the top of

its agenda, it's time for this government to start putting some of these left out people and their forgotten issues at the top of its to-do list. Thank you.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

### Support for Low-Income People

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today the Regina & District Food Bank reported, and I quote, "Every day in our community more than 10,000 people worry about where they will find their next meal." Nearly half of them, 47 per cent are children, and we know that the number of people using food banks is up 20 per cent province-wide, the second highest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the government brags about our province's prosperity, but there are more than 10,000 people in this city alone that are suffering. And the Regina Food Bank is calling for a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy to deal with this issue.

To the Premier: does his government think it's acceptable for 10,000 people in this city alone to be going hungry? And if he doesn't, will he heed the food bank's call for a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, our government believes if even one person is hungry, that's one too many, and that's why we've been working extremely hard since 2007 to make sure that we've added money to the enhancements. We've added over \$40 million worth of enhancements to income assistance programs in the last three years, Mr. Speaker. Our average weekly earnings are up 6 per cent, and our unemployment rate is at 5.5 and that is the second lowest in all of Canada. I know, Mr. Speaker, that's below the national average rate. We have more people working in Saskatchewan now than ever before, and we put more money back in people's pockets as well.

Is there more work to do, Mr. Speaker? Yes there is. We're working very hard on it. And I assure you that the people of the province are encouraging us to make sure everybody has prosperity in this province.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, this government is clearly out of touch with what's happening in this province. Many of the people who are using the food bank are actually working, but they can't earn enough to provide themselves and their children with basic necessities.

We know today that, Mr. Speaker, a single person working full time at a minimum wage job in our province spends three-quarters of their income on rent and food costs. And these just aren't students working part time. The government's own

figures show that nearly 40 per cent of minimum wage earners are over 25 years old. Many have families to support. Yet this government has frozen the wages of the working poor in our province until after the next election.

To the minister: will she realize that a lot of working people in our province can't make ends meet, and index the minimum wage?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, we're very aware that there are many people that have discomforts in the way they're living right now, and that's why we have reduced the provincial income tax. And we removed 80,000 people off the tax rolls. Mr. Speaker, 80,000 people. Fewer are paying taxes in this province now than under the previous government. Low-income single parents right now will save \$2,800 annually. Senior couples . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. It's getting difficult to hear. There's too many people who want to answer the question. I'd ask, allow the minister to respond. I recognize the minister.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, senior couples can now keep \$2,200 annually in their pockets because of the decisions that we've made. Mr. Speaker, we've doubled the number of seniors that are eligible for benefits under the seniors' income plan. Under the previous government, they had made no movement on that file at all, totally ignored the file for 16 years. And now all of a sudden they've decided they've come up with some new information. Mr. Speaker, there's more work to do, and we are working on it.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, we have yet to see proof about the 80,000 number that they often throw out. And she knows that single senior women are often the ones who are facing the toughest times when it comes to food banks.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Regina Food Bank noted that the rising cost of housing is one of the main reasons that many Saskatchewan families have to rely on food banks. And we know CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation] reports that the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Regina is now approaching \$900 a month, and it's even more in Estevan and Saskatoon. But this government even refuses to debate the issue around rent control.

To the Premier: will he understand that people are going hungry in this province because of the high cost of housing? And what's he going to do about it?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know, or they should know, that we've increased funding for housing programs by 45 per cent since we became government.

We've partnered with the federal government and invested \$161 million into new and existing housing over two years.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are 700 more affordable units in our province, and we're working on 1,250 more units. We've increased the shelter rate, we've increased the supplement rental rate, and we've indexed them. We made sure that there are more seniors that are eligible for social housing.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to holler about work that should be done. For 16 years they ignored the needs of this province — 16 years. We're working on it. We can't change overnight what they left for 16 years of neglect.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we can talk a lot about things we did in the 16 years. And we're proud of our record. But I can tell you, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the growing number of people living in hunger, who are hungry in our province today will put pressure on our health system in the years to come.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a recent study by the Public Health Nutritionists of Saskatchewan estimated it cost \$185 a week to provide a family of four with good food here in Regina and \$250 a week in northern Saskatchewan. And when these people can't afford nutritious food, their health suffers. Canadians with the lowest household incomes are nearly three times more likely to have diabetes, for example. And we know that diabetes leads to increased risk of heart disease, stroke, blindness, and kidney failure.

To the Premier: why is his government condemning low-income people to poor health all because they won't take action to make life more affordable for families struggling to make ends meet here in Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, one of the initiatives that we started as this government is recognizing that every ministry is not a silo. It's an enterprise approach we have when it comes to working with poor people and with people that are disadvantaged. That's why we made sure that we've increased the minimum wage three times since we became government. We've increased funding to CBOs [community-based organization] . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. The member from Saskatoon Centre had the opportunity to present the question without interference. I ask the members to allow the minister to be able to respond. I recognize the minister.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, we know that there's work to do. We know that there is no issue that's standing alone in this government. We know that we have to have more houses. We know that there is, money needs to be going to CBOs and that's the work we've started. We've also worked on programs

like ACE [accelerating connections to employment] to make sure the people who are on social assistance have a chance to get into the employment line. We've actually made sure that we decreased the portion, education portion of property tax so people have more money in their pocket.

There's more work to be done, Mr. Speaker, but every ministry is working together to ensure that every person in this province can benefit from being a Saskatchewan citizen.

[14:15]

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

### **Kidney Donor Paired Exchange Program**

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister has mismanaged Saskatchewan's world-renowned kidney transplant program to the point where it shut down in July of '09 and has only reopened on September 1st of this year. Now we're being told that it is only doing one transplant per month.

Mr. Speaker, people are being encouraged to sign up for the national living donor paired exchange registry, which matches living kidney donations between patients with a willing but incompatible donor and another pair in the same situation across Canada. Mr. Speaker, but what the minister isn't telling people is that he's not covering the travel and lodging expenses for the donors or their support person that goes with them. Mr. Speaker, since the minister is leaving people with little choice but to access the national paired program, is he going to cover the associated costs for the kidney donors?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the living donor paired exchange program is relatively new. It just started in the year 2009, so a little over a year old. We've looked at it and are looking at the possibility of covering some of the costs of people that have to travel to donate their kidney for the paired living program. Some provinces are covering it. Some provinces are not covering it, Mr. Speaker.

We're looking at the program, as it's relatively a new program, through the Canadian Blood Services, Mr. Speaker. We're working with them and other provinces to try and come up with a uniform program across the nation.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, given how long the minister takes to make any decision and how many times he observes and reviews and all that sort of thing, people aren't encouraged by that answer.

The living donor paired exchange program is a wonderful program that provides an avenue for people who need to get a kidney to actually get the transplant. One person who used the program says the concern is, and I quote, "There are people who could be giving their kidneys to other people, but they can't afford to do it."

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: when is he going to protect Saskatchewan people and start properly funding the paired program so that the donor's expenses are covered and Saskatchewan people who need a kidney transplant receive the care that they deserve?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I've already answered that question, Mr. Speaker. I said that the program is relatively new. It's through the Canada blood services. It's a living donor paired program. It's new. All provinces are looking at it. Some provinces are covering expenses; others aren't. We haven't to this point, Mr. Speaker, but we're certainly looking at it to see whether that would be a good use of money, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, this may be some information that might be an incentive to actually make a decision in a timely fashion. The province pays between 30,000 and 35,000 per year for someone to be on peritoneal dialysis and 55,000 for someone to be on hemodialysis per year. According to the kidney transplant program, a kidney transplant saves the province substantial dollars in comparison to chronic kidney disease treatment.

So, Mr. Speaker, properly funding the expenses of donors who participate in the living donor paired exchange program would save Saskatchewan taxpayers thousands of dollars. And kidney patients would save them the unnecessary pain and stress associated with having to wait for a donor who can afford to cover their own expenses.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister going to do the responsible thing and properly cover the expenses of donors to save not only the taxpayers thousands of dollars but kidney transplant patients extra stress and pain?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, since September we see that there have been four living donor candidates. Since that time two had cancelled out because they were deemed unfit, Mr. Speaker. There have been two. We're looking into those two.

We're looking at whether that would be a program that we should move on in the province. As I said, it is not uniform across the nation. This is a national program. We'll certainly look at it and consider funding into the future.

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

### **Funding for Foster Home**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of nearly \$100,000 wrongly paid out by the government to an organization that does not even have a contract with the government?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the member has posed a question to the Minister of Finance. I don't know anything about that particular file, and I'll take notice.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring the Sask Party government gave the Rising Stars youth ranch over 92,000 to provide care for children, but the reality is that no contract was in place and no children were even at the facility. To the minister: why was 92,000 paid out without a contract and without any care provided to any children?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on the specifics of this case because it is a zoning dispute between Rising Stars and the RM of Prince Albert, and the ministry has no jurisdiction over it.

I can tell you that there was standard practices followed and that our ministry is announcing the funding and proceeding with the construction. Mr. Speaker, this is a specific issue and I know that the members opposite brought up the issue last year. It is between the RM and the Rising Stars, and I think that the members opposite should be making sure that their messaging is correct.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's about mismanagement of this government. It's about lack of due diligence. It's about transferring almost half a million dollars of taxpayers' money to a facility that never even had the zoning in place, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the auditor's report came out and it made it abundantly clear that we need more foster homes, and the opposition fully recognizes this. But all we've seen from this government on this front is incompetence and mismanagement like so many other files, Mr. Speaker. They spent 350,000 to build this home last fall when the proper zoning wasn't even in place. Then in the spring they spent another 92,000 for operating expenses, but nothing was operating yet and no children were benefiting. No contract was in place.

Meanwhile, foster homes are overcrowded and the auditor says children are at risk. To the minister: why should children and foster parents have to pay the price for the Sask Party's mismanagement?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — I can assure the members opposite that there are children that are being transitioned to the P.A. [Prince Albert] group home. There are children that . . . All of our children are looked after. We know where the children are. We know the names of the children. We are looking after the

children. I assure the members opposite there are no children that are in danger.

This home, this home was opened. There was a zoning dispute. We are making sure that there are spaces for children ages 6 to 12. There is room for 10 of these children. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the day when they are open. But in the meantime, this is a zoning dispute. And I assure you that we are looking after the children, and we are working hard to.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, we heard last week and we had confirmed last week that this government has thousands of children in care — a massive increase, Mr. Speaker. What we heard is that the circumstances aren't being verified, Mr. Speaker. And what we heard, Mr. Speaker, is that this government doesn't know where those children live. They don't know whether they're going to school. They don't know about the care and well-being of those children.

What kind of a parent would we call that, Mr. Speaker? In fact I think this government would be intervening, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of negligence, and taking the children from those parents.

This government, who's the permanent ward for these children, have no idea where they are. Yet we see the mismanagement continue in this year, spending half a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, for a program that's not operating and doesn't even have the authority to operate without a contract as well, Mr. Speaker.

I look to the Finance Minister: how do you answer for this, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, when we became government, we were well aware of the fact there were children in overcrowded foster homes. There were children that were where it was easier to track a library book than to track children under those people. Because there was no computer program in place, there was no way to actually know what was happening on reserves.

We have spent just about \$18 million to ensure that we have a program set up so that we know where our children are at the drop of a hat, Mr. Speaker. There is a complex database in place right now. We know where the children are. We know how many children are in our care, but it's not as easy as it should be.

We are the last jurisdiction in Canada to actually have the right kind of data system. Our children deserve more, and we're working on it. Mr. Speaker, we have increased the amount of money given to child and family services by 106 per cent. Have we got more work to do, Mr. Speaker? Yes we do.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

### Arrangements for a Long-Term Care Facility

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, last year the Saskatoon Health Region spent more than \$82 million on affiliated health care facilities like Oliver Lodge, Sherbrooke nursing home, Sunnyside nursing home, among others. About 75 million of that was for operating costs for those homes, and there was almost \$7 million spent on capital. Now we know all of this because the information was included in the Saskatoon Health Region 2009-10 annual report. You just have to turn to page 105 and there it is.

To the minister: will the full cost of the Amicus deal be included in future annual reports? Will it include the cost of the loan guarantee or, if the minister prefers, the contingent liability in those statements? And if not, why not?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the member is right when it identifies a few of the affiliate long-term care facilities that we have in the province. Unfortunately when you add up the number of those beds, it simply wasn't enough to manage the demand that we saw in the Saskatoon Health Region. Those facilities have been up and running for many, many years. Unfortunately we also saw that within acute care centres we'd have anywhere up to 60 seniors living in an acute care centre simply because, under the former government, they just didn't supply enough beds.

Mr. Speaker, under the Saskatchewan Party government we have, between the Saskatoon Health Region and the Catholic Health Ministry, entered into an agreement to build Samaritan Place where seniors will leave, be able to move out of acute care centres and live in a proper facility such as Samaritan Place, Mr. Speaker. It's a good deal for seniors in Saskatchewan. It's a good deal for Saskatchewan residents.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, no one is talking about the need. We're not talking about the lack of need for long-term care beds. We know we need more long-term care beds in the province.

Now the minister takes every chance he can to duck behind the Catholic Health Ministry. Yet the cost to taxpayers of the government's arrangement with affiliated health care facilities like those run by the Catholic Health Ministry, like St. Ann's in Saskatoon, is out there for everyone to see. What's different about Amicus, Mr. Speaker, is the lack of openness, transparency and accountability, which is something the Sask Party promised in the last provincial election. The government doesn't want taxpayers to understand exactly how much debt we will all be piling up in this deal.

So to the minister: why is he trying to hide the true cost of this insider deal? And if he's not trying to hide it, then why isn't Amicus an affiliate?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, there are many different arrangements within health regions to provide various types of care, whether it's non-government organizations, whether it's affiliates that the member opposite mentioned, whether it's health care organizations that provide long-term care to health regions, Mr. Speaker. You have to look at Extendicare. It's not an affiliate. It's a health care organization, Mr. Speaker, that supplies care.

What we do through the Ministry of Health is supply global budgets to health regions. They then move and supply the services that they see are fit. I find it curious though, Mr. Speaker, on one hand, she'll say we need more beds, Mr. Speaker. We need more beds, even though for 16 years they didn't build a new bed. And then on the other hand, she said she'd scrap the deal, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, in the annual report of the Saskatoon Health Region, they clearly lay out all of the organizations that are affiliated nursing homes. These are privately owned affiliates, Mr. Speaker. What we want to understand is why wasn't Amicus an affiliate through the Catholic Health Ministry? All the other facilities owned by the Catholic Health Ministry are affiliates. Why isn't Amicus an affiliate, and isn't it because they were trying to hide the details of this deal?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I explained to the member in the previous question that there are different arrangements with health regions to supply certain type of care within their health region. Mr. Speaker, some are through an affiliate arrangement. Some are where a health organization affiliate such as an Extendicare for example, that supplies long-term care to many health regions, does a very good job of supplying that care, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is an arrangement that the Saskatoon Health Region, through the Catholic Health Ministry, have entered into to build a Samaritan Place to make sure that we can ensure there are enough beds in Saskatoon so that seniors do not have to live in acute care centres, that they can live in an appropriate care centre, Mr. Speaker. We know where the NDP would be on this. They would scrap it, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. But not only would they scrap it, they just wouldn't supply the proper beds. Haven't for a long, long time, Mr. Speaker, and if they're ever elected again, they won't then either.

[14:30]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, the government likes to describe Amicus as an example of new and innovative funding, but it's neither new nor innovative to ring up debt while trying to hide it, Mr. Speaker, certainly not from conservatives in this province.

Now the cost to taxpayers of government arrangements with affiliated health care facilities is published every year. And, Mr. Speaker, I note that Extencare is privately owned. I believe it's even on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Now Amicus is, "owned by the Catholic Health Ministry." Now, under affiliates, all of that information is published every year, Mr. Speaker. We know how much it costs. What we don't know and what the government won't tell us is what elaborate lengths they've gone to to hide this deal.

So to the minister: why doesn't he make it all clear? And why doesn't he lift the blackout of the 1,800 pages that they blacked out, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I know the opposition has a real issue when you have third-party deliverers within the system, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to see the Catholic Health Ministry with the health region supplying Samaritan Place. We heard the same cries and groans, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I believe it's only fair and right that the minister be allowed the same opportunity to respond without a lot of interference as the member had to place the question.

I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, we heard concerns when this government, for the first time, Mr. Speaker, entered into an agreement with a third-party deliverer to supply surgical care in this province, Mr. Speaker. We see what is being done in Saskatoon, over 100 procedures already done. Whether it's in Omni here in Regina, many procedures being done.

Mr. Speaker, if we go back, if we go back to the NDP days, Mr. Speaker, there'll be hundreds more on the wait-list, Mr. Speaker. And there'll be hundreds of people living in acute care centres because they just don't supply the proper facilities.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the . . . Order. Order. Order. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Michelson:** — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Moose Jaw North has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The leave has been granted. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Michelson:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery are two special people to me. One is my wife Debbie sitting up there, and with her is our grandson Jacob. Jacob, why don't you give us a little wave?

Mr. Speaker, Jacob is five years old. He turned five in September. And when we were driving down the streets of Melfort, he said, Grandpa, I can't wait to be six years old because that's when the Moose Jaw Warriors will be playing in the new rink. So that's what kind of a sport he is.

They're just on their way to visit great-grandma who turned 99 in October. And they decided to stop and say hi. Would everybody welcome them to their Legislative Building.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

### Changes to Saskatchewan Pension Plan

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make an announcement regarding the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. Mr. Speaker, as we noted in our 2010-11 budget, Saskatchewan is already a leader in pension innovation in Canada. For example, the rules governing pension plans in Saskatchewan are among the most flexible in the country with regard to pension payouts and the unlocking of pension funds.

Saskatchewan has the highest rate of coverage of occupational pension plans in the country. Saskatchewan is home to the largest defined contribution pension plans in the country, and these plans account for about half of the total membership in Saskatchewan's occupational pension plans. Also Saskatchewan created the Saskatchewan Pension Plan in 1986 to provide a unique retirement income savings vehicle for individuals with little or no access to employer-sponsored pension plans or other retirement savings arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, the SPP [Saskatchewan Pension Plan] is the only plan of its kind in Canada. Employer contributions are not required and member contributions are voluntary.

Some of the key features of the SPP are, membership is open to any resident between the ages of 18 and 71. Contributions are tax deductible within RRSP [Registered Retirement Savings Plan] limits, and earnings are tax sheltered until received as retirement income as early as age 55. The SPP's investment activities operate at arm's length from government. The SPP offers plan members professional investment management at institutional costs where private sector investment managers actively invest member funds in accordance with the investment policies established by the SPP board of trustees. Also the five-person board of trustees is appointed by the government by order in council, and the board reports to the legislature through the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, participation in the SPP does not depend on employer involvement. In addition, the contribution limit is not tied to the contributor's employment income. In the past this

provision has allowed the SPP to market itself as a retirement savings vehicle for homemakers and others who do not earn employment income. However this feature of the SPP is no longer required as a result of the introduction of tax-free savings accounts by the federal government in 2009 which allow individuals to contribute up to \$5,000 in annual tax-sheltered savings.

Mr. Speaker, because the SPP specializes in handling a large number of small accounts in an efficient manner, it can be an attractive pension alternative for small businesses and their employees. However, SPP's effectiveness to serve in this capacity is hindered because contributions to the SPP are limited to \$600 per year. This limit is set out in both the SPP regulations and the federal *Income Tax Act*, and has not changed for 24 years.

To address these issues and to improve the SPP's attractiveness to small business and the self-employed, Saskatchewan's 2010 budget proposed amendments to the federal Act. These amendments will increase the annual SPP contribution limit to \$2,500 with contributions fully dependent upon the contributor's earned income.

I am pleased to announce today, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government has agreed to Saskatchewan's SPP proposals. Effective the 2010 contribution year, the SPP contribution limit is being increased to \$2,500 subject to an individual's registered retirement savings plan contribution room.

In addition, the federal changes will permit transfers from other registered plans to the SPP. We are putting a \$10,000 annual limit on these transfers, Mr. Speaker. Also similar to our RRSPs, SPP funds will now be eligible for rollover into the RRSP or registered disability savings plan of a financially dependent infirm child or grandchild.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, SPP annuity payments are now eligible for the pension income credit and for pension income splitting. These changes to the SPP improve the retirement savings options in Saskatchewan by offering a proven, cost-effective, fully portable savings option to a wider segment of Saskatchewan residents. It also provides more people with the opportunity to create an adequate level of retirement savings.

This is good news for young wage earners, part-time employees, and all of those who do not have access to an employer-sponsored pension plan. This is good news for small business in Saskatchewan that want to help their employees save for retirement but cannot afford to administer their own pension plan. And this is good news for all Canadians because the SPP now provides an example to other governments of the kind of pension innovation that could offer Canadians more flexibility in saving for retirement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the minister for providing the statement to me prior to question period here today. I welcome, as we did prior, to the administrators of the pension plan that are here today as well,

who provide great service to Saskatchewan people within this specific instrument, Mr. Speaker, and good governance that has been a history of the Saskatchewan Pension Plan.

When we look at the changes that are here today, there's some housekeeping changes, Mr. Speaker, that reflect changes in the federal climate, changes in new instruments that have been brought forward on a federal level, the TFSA [tax-free savings account], Mr. Speaker. The Premier looks perplexed. What I'll explain to him here, if he wants to look perplexed, is in fact one of the most significant changes here today is in direct response to the introduction of the TFSA, Mr. Speaker. And so then we needed to refine our Act here, Mr. Speaker, and our plan here. And we see that today.

Beyond that, we see some other refinements, Mr. Speaker, some updates, might I say, modernizations, Mr. Speaker. And certainly at face value and in quick study, we would welcome these modest refinements, Mr. Speaker. But at the same point in time, I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that we should hold close to this discussion at all points in time the challenge of income security, Mr. Speaker. And certainly while we welcome the refinements, the updates, the modernization that we see here today, this certainly doesn't go any distance, Mr. Speaker, in addressing what is a critical challenge for Saskatchewan people.

And we can be proud of the leadership that Saskatchewan has played, Mr. Speaker, and the role that we have played as a province, Mr. Speaker. But we need to as well look at where we're going, Mr. Speaker.

I know when I look at the *Access and Affordability* report that was released today by the Saskatchewan food banks and many partnering agencies, university as well, Mr. Speaker, what we see in that is that many seniors, Mr. Speaker, are barely able to make it by, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the costs of food and housing, Mr. Speaker.

And I know the Premier's chirping from his seat, Mr. Speaker, because of course this runs counter to his cheery view that he likes to sell of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that's a disconnect from the reality for so many. Mr. Speaker, when we look at what this report highlighted here, Mr. Speaker, is that a senior here in a case study from the report of *Access and Affordability*, Mr. Speaker, is that 51 per cent of a senior's budget . . . And a 70-year-old woman is spending 51 per cent of that money on rent, 14 per cent of that on food, Mr. Speaker. And these are things that we need to be watching for, Mr. Speaker, and making sure that we're responding to, Mr. Speaker.

Further to that, we should look at the context that we've seen, Mr. Speaker, which is the increase to the cost of housing and food. I believe this study also puts out that from 2002 to 2009, Mr. Speaker, food has increased by 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and that housing has increased by 38 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

So as I've said from the moment I took my feet, Mr. Speaker, we welcome the updates that we see as we take them, look at them after a quick study, Mr. Speaker, they're modernization to a plan. But we certainly should never see this as the panacea to provide income security to the many across this province. It doesn't do anything to address the . . . And I don't believe the minister was suggesting that it did. But it certainly doesn't do

anything to address the circumstance for the many seniors right now, Mr. Speaker, on fixed income, that are finding it difficult to get by. And certainly even as we look to the younger generation, we certainly need to do more.

We know that there's upcoming meetings, Mr. Speaker, of the ministers of Finance. We know that our Finance minister will be attending those meetings. And certainly it's going to be important that as the minister speaks about leadership from Saskatchewan, that certainly this is a time for the minister to exemplify that leadership. We hope that this isn't what the minister calls as leadership. This is refinement, modernization, and updating, Mr. Speaker.

We do need to look for a pan-Canadian solution, Mr. Speaker, make sure that this Finance minister goes there — and I'm certain that he or I'd hope that he will be — Mr. Speaker, to work co-operatively with Finance ministers and from a position of leadership, to find a solution that's portable, that's secure, and that works for all Canadians across Saskatchewan, recognizing the many, many challenges and changes in our workplace, the fact that many individuals move from province to province.

We should be considering in a significant way, Mr. Speaker, the merits in looking at expansion of the Canadian pension plan, Mr. Speaker. There are some significant benefits to expansion of this plan when we look at it from a cost-efficient perspective, Mr. Speaker, when we look at it from an administrative perspective, and when we look at it from what it provides workers across Saskatchewan in security of both individuals now, but well into the future. It's indexed, it's secure, and it's portable, Mr. Speaker. So I'd hope that this minister is fully ready to engage in those discussions and look for a pan-Canadian solution.

But as it relates to this Bill right here, as long as we're crystal clear that this certainly is no sort of panacea, Mr. Speaker, we welcome updates to what is an important piece and an important tool for some within this province, Mr. Speaker. So we welcome it at this point in time. We look forward to further questions on it. Thank you.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order.

[14:45]

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### **Bill No. 619 — *The School Bus Drivers of Saskatchewan Appreciation Day Act***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 619, *The School Bus Drivers of Saskatchewan Appreciation Day Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Athabasca has moved first reading of Bill 619, *The School Bus Drivers of Saskatchewan Appreciation Day Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to

adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

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

**The Speaker:** — When shall the Bill be considered a second time? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

## PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Chair of the Human Services Committee.

### **Standing Committee on Human Services**

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to present its ninth report. I move:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services now be concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair of the Human Services Committee has moved:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the Chair of the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

### **Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

**Mr. Michelson:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its ninth report. I move:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair of Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice has moved:

That the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice 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 Chair of the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

**Mr. Michelson:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 158, *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010* with amendment.

**The Speaker:** — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

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

**The Speaker:** — The Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 158, *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010* 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 a first time?

#### FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

##### Bill No. 158 — *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010*

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

**The Speaker:** — It has 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:** — Carried.

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

**The Speaker:** — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety.

#### THIRD READINGS

##### Bill No. 158 — *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010*

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 158, *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010* 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.

#### STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

##### Ruling on a Point of Order

**The Speaker:** — Before orders of the day, I've got a response to a request made on orders. Members, before orders of the day, I would ask your attention as I am prepared to make a statement on a point of order raised by the Deputy Government House Leader.

The Deputy Government House Leader's point of order concerned the use of the word deceive by the Leader of the Opposition during question period in an exchange with the Minister of Agriculture. I have reviewed the verbatim, and I am prepared to make a statement regarding the exchange.

The Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote from page 6374 of *Hansard*: "The minister signed AgStability. He's the minister who signed, so let's get that clear. And let's not deceive the public . . ."

In Beauchesne's, 6th edition, paragraph 490, the word deceit is listed as unacceptable, while in paragraph 489, the same word is listed as acceptable by the House of Commons in Ottawa usage. The reason for this is that the context and use of the word is key to determining whether or not it is acceptable.

One of the acceptability tests is cited in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2nd edition at page 614, which is as follows: "Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order."

In a ruling dated November 19th, 2004, Speaker Kowalsky stated the following about the use of the word deceit. And I quote:

With respect to the use of the word deceive or deception that was called to attention once, but also used again by the member for, I believe, Arm River. The definition of the word deceit in the Oxford dictionary is, to believe what is false or to mislead purposely. With misleading . . . we are often misled, not whether it be intentionally or not intentionally, but using the word deceive then implies intention. So I would ask members not to use that word in this Assembly.

In response to the point of order, the Opposition House Leader asked that the use of the term hypocritical by the Minister of Agriculture in the same exchange also be reviewed by the Speaker. On page 6374 of yesterday's *Hansard*, the Minister of Agriculture said, and I quote, "I find it somewhat amazing and hypocritical of the Leader of the Opposition."

In passing, I want to remind the Opposition House Leader that this was in effect a separate point of order. In future, I remind members that a new point of order should not be raised when speaking to another point of order. Rather it should be raised as a separate point of order.

Having said that, I did also review how the word is used. Again the word hypocrisy can be found in both the acceptable and unacceptable lists in Beauchesne. The same standard for context must be applied. Interestingly, this word was also addressed by Speaker Kowalsky in the ruling I've just cited. Speaker Kowalsky ruled that the word hypocritical, when applied to an individual, is not in order.

I ask both the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister of Agriculture to be careful in their choice of words. It's not acceptable to question each other's integrity, honesty, or character. In Beauchesne's paragraph 491, it says, and I quote:

The Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. No language is, by virtue of any list, acceptable or unacceptable. A word which is parliamentary in one context may cause disorder in another context, and therefore be unparliamentary.

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

#### MOTION UNDER RULE 59

##### Assistance for Livestock Producers

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave, seek leave to, under rule 59, to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity on the issue of the much-needed assistance for livestock producers in the province. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had a group of farm families, beef producers here in Regina, and they left very dissatisfied with the answers they received from the government. So today I'm proposing a motion. I'm asking the Premier and the Sask Party MLAs to support this motion. And I'll briefly read the text of the motion now, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly calls upon the federal and provincial governments to work together to provide Saskatchewan livestock producers with an immediate assistance payment of \$150 per head for breeding stock.

And further, that in making this call, the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan assert the following: first, that the beef industry in Saskatchewan remains in a crisis due to the state and the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] issue, as well as the high Canadian dollar, previous years of drought; and secondly, that many livestock producers have been hit hard by this years flooding; and third, that cattle numbers in this province

have declined from 3.6 million in 2005 to 3.1 million in 2010; and four, that livestock producers and the Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan have asked for an assistance payment of \$150 per head for breeding stock due to the dire situation facing many livestock producers.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier and the Sask Party MLAs will allow me to do this and move this motion, I think the people of the province would appreciate that very much. So I ask for leave to move the motion.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has not been granted.

#### 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 470 through 632.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Unfortunately I was unable to hear the response from the member from Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 470 through 632.

**The Speaker:** — Answers to questions 470 through 632 are tabled.

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill No. 161

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 161 — The Election Amendment Act, 2010** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the reason that any government would ever . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Order. The member from Regina Coronation Park has been recognized. Allow the member to speak.

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the only reason that any government would introduce a Bill around *The Election Act*, the only reason any government should introduce a Bill around an election Act is to protect and enhance our democracy. To make it easier for people to vote, to make it more effective to grow the number of people who participate actively in our democracy. To help people vote, to help them choose who is going to be their representative in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. And Bill No. 161 fails miserably on that test, Mr. Speaker, because it does not enhance the right of anyone to vote. In fact, one of the most offensive parts of Bill 161 is that it requires . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. There's a couple of members who are having a separate debate. I'd ask the members to go behind the bar and have that discussion. Allow the member from Regina Coronation Park to speak, please.

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 161 has a very offensive part to it. And the offensive part is that it requires photo ID.

And now I have to ask myself, and government members should ask, who is it that is asking to be required to provide photo ID when they go to vote to elect their MLA? Who in their right mind would say, oh put me through some more hoops, make me answer all kinds of questions? Not a single person. You cannot point to a single person in Saskatchewan that said, force me to provide photo ID so that I can vote and elect my MLA.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I know of three homeless people in Regina that have frozen to death in Regina this year. Three people frozen to death. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What are you talking about, the Minister of Health says. I'm talking about how you effectively have disenfranchised people that are unlikely to vote at the best of times but certainly will not vote if they're required to provide photo ID.

We need to give voice to the voiceless. That's our jobs, to give voice to the voiceless. We need to stand up for the most downtrodden people, individuals in our society. And any government that fails to do that does so at their own risk, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

This election Act fails miserably in every single test. And I want to point out that the minister responsible . . . I'm going to quote from December 1st *Leader-Post*, and the quote is, "We're going to make sure we continue consulting with the stakeholder groups to ensure that we have all the avenues covered off to be more inclusive versus exclusive." That's what he said talking about *The Election Act* amendment.

Well you cannot produce a single person, a single expert that can tell you how forcing individuals to come up with photo ID is going to be inclusive in the slightest way, Mr. Speaker. I've

only been elected through six general elections. Only six. But you know, if I ran a seventh time, maybe that would be the first time one of my constituents might ask me to force them to provide photo ID so they could vote for me. You know, there's always a first.

On the other hand, maybe I might have someone who works at a polling station that says, you know, this is going to be inclusive. We're going to be more inclusive if you would just force everybody to have a photo ID. You know, the absurdity of it, Mr. Speaker. It's just bizarre that the Sask Party government is asking us and the people of Saskatchewan to believe that somehow or other there's a big call for photo ID under *The Election Act* of Saskatchewan. It's just bizarre. It's non-existence, it's nonsensical that that is happening. It's just not.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, of one of the saddest incidents that happened in one of the previous six elections that I ran in. And I had a voter, happened to be a woman, who had come to a polling station and was told, no you have to vote at, and was sent to a different polling station in a different . . . It happened to be, both of them, in schools in the constituency, but you have to go this other school. Well she went over there, and they said, no that's a mix-up. You have to go back to where you presented yourself in the first place. And then she was sent back again to the other place and then back to where she'd first shown up.

And I happened to be there just sort of thanking some of the people that were working on my campaign and scrutineers and that sort of individual. I happened to be there, and this woman recognized me, this constituent, and she tore a strip off of me, Mr. Speaker, because I couldn't run the election. Members know that that's not the way it works. We select the Chief Electoral Officer to run the election, and they are the ones that are responsible for all of those details.

You know, there was nothing that I could do, but it bothers me to this day that one of my constituents showed up to vote and was unable to vote because of a mix-up. Now it has nothing to do with photo ID, but you just throw one more issue into the electoral process, and it's just a recipe for mistakes. It's a recipe for disaster.

Photo ID wouldn't have helped in this case one iota, and it didn't hurt because the end result was this woman, my constituent, did not vote in that general election. If she is watching, I apologize, though I don't know what I can apologize for. I feel distressed that she was effectively disenfranchised during that election. And I thank her for making the effort to vote, and I encourage everyone to make the effort to vote, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if any of the increased usage, people who are increasing the usage at the Regina Food Bank by 20 per cent, I wonder if one of those individuals said, you know, sure wish I had to use photo ID so I could vote. I wonder if they're feeling more inclusive, if they're getting the warm feeling from the Sask Party government. I wonder how warm they're feeling about their right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question, zero question, that what Bill 161 is all about is disenfranchising the poorest voters in

Saskatchewan, and I say, shame on the Sask Party government for even contemplating such a thing. They need to withdraw this notion of photo ID and withdraw it at the earliest opportunity. Then we can look at *The Election Act* because *The Election Act* should be looked at. We should be doing the things that we can to make it more inclusive, the very things that the government claim to be doing. We should be making it more inclusive, but this Act is doing exactly the opposite, exactly the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about the three homeless people that have frozen to death in Regina this year. And it's just . . . It's a tragedy of epic proportions. Homeless people, I think it's safe to say, lack the safety net of family for the most part. I think it's safe to say that they lack an effective circle of friends to help out in a time of need. And I can tell you that we should be spending a lot more time dealing with homelessness than we should with trying to figure out how we can make sure that homeless people can't vote or how we can try to make sure that poorest people have difficulty voting, make sure that . . .

The government has come up with a proposal that says that you have to have a photo ID to vote. Well you know, we have photo ID in our drivers' licences, but what about the thousands of people eligible to vote that don't drive? What do they do, Mr. Speaker? Do they have to go out and pay \$25 to get a photo ID?

What about some of the increased numbers of people that are using the food bank, that are struggling just to get from wherever it is that they call home to the food bank and back with a meagre supply of groceries. And we're often talking not three or four or five blocks; we're often talking 3, 4, and 5 kilometres, and in many instances further. These people have a struggle, Mr. Speaker, to try and figure out how it is that they're going to get some food on the table for their children if they have children. And indeed the statistics show that half of the users of the food bank of Regina are children. The adults need to not have another problem put in their way. They don't need to have to worry about paying for or presenting themselves somewhere to get a photo ID, if they knew where that was, if they knew where that was.

You know, some of them might present themselves for a photo ID, although the logic of why anyone would subject themselves to that escapes me. You know, we're talking about people that . . . some of whom have little trust in our system, and frankly I'm not sure that there's a great deal of reason why they should have a lot of trust in our system.

The system has not exactly treated them like kings and queens. The system has not exactly led them to huge wealth and prosperity. It hasn't led these users of the Regina & District Food Bank to grand homes and grand incomes and three weeks annual vacation every year, and all of the other things that many people in our society have come to expect.

Mr. Speaker, we've got, in this election Act we have got shades of 25 years ago. And I hate even making the comparison because it sounds like I'm trying to live in the past. I'm trying to learn from the past to help point out so that we don't have to renew the same mistakes that were made 25 years ago. Twenty-five years ago civil servants in Saskatchewan felt disenfranchised. They were afraid to hold party memberships.

Certainly in the then opposition party, the New Democratic Party, they feared for their jobs. They were refusing in mass to, just to a person virtually, to have a lawn sign. And yet the proof of the pudding was when the election was called, they overwhelmingly and massively supported the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan. And that's both in 1986 and again in 1991 when we formed the government.

The fear troubled me. The fear of participating in the electoral process troubled me. And it was a very real, a very real fear, Mr. Speaker, a very real fear. What you only needed to do was spend a little time in your constituency going knocking door to door and listening, genuinely connecting with constituents, connecting with people. Not everyone will open up. Not everyone even likes you or your party, but a surprising, a surprising number of my constituents did open up to me and would express their hopes. They would express their concerns, and I've tried to deal with that throughout the years.

Not one of those constituents, Mr. Speaker, thought that we needed photo ID in *The Election Act*. Not one of them. My constituents felt that we needed many things in our province, but photo ID for an election Act was not one of them.

My constituents asked for integrity, truthfulness, honesty, as much transparency as we could do. And they in turn said, we want to be able to trust our MLA. We trust that you'll not always say the things that I want you to say but that you will be saying things with us in your heart, with the constituents of Regina Coronation Park in my case, and of the people of Saskatchewan. And I've tried to honour those requests that I've run into every time I've gone canvassing. I've tried to serve my terms like that, Mr. Speaker, and I've tried to be as straightforward with my constituents as I can.

And I want to contrast that with today. We're told that, you know, the Saskatchewan economy is booming. Well the reality is that today's production of gas and oil is lower than it was three years ago when the Sask Party formed government — less oil, less gas being pumped out of the ground today than there was then.

The reality is Saskatchewan's gross domestic product is lower today than it was three years ago, lower today by every measure than it was three years ago.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the debt in Saskatchewan is going up. What is the debt going up — \$448 million? Member for Rosemont? Member for Rosemont? The debt is going up \$448 million this year . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you. \$4.2 billion over the next four years, but \$448 million this year alone.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if I were a member of the Sask Party government, I would want to disenfranchise people that might be paying attention to those things. I would want to make sure that they didn't vote. I would want to make sure, if I was a Sask Party government member, that Bill 161, *The Election Act* amendment got passed — this amendment particularly, the one requiring photo ID.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, seniors have worked, typically worked all of their lifetime making our province what it is today. I think it's safe to say we're all grateful for people who are seniors — I'm reluctant to say much older than some of us are, but — the people who have built this province. And the seniors I can tell you are one of the . . . Many seniors are more offended when you don't recognize them by name than many younger people are. They expect to be known.

And I know that this is, I know this is absolutely true when it comes to rural Saskatchewan. I remember the first vote I made in Broderick in 1975. And I showed up at the polling station, and we had the assistant clerk introduced me to the others. And I hadn't been in town but for . . . Let me get this right. I'd been in town about three months. I moved there from another beautiful part of the province, Mr. Speaker. I'd moved there from Whitewood. But I remember how shocked I was at being recognized because it just, it just shocked me. But I was very pleased that they knew my name, and the voting was very easy to do and very straightforward.

That's how you make voting inclusive. They didn't say, oh, show us your driver's licence. Oh, show us your photo ID, worse yet. They said, here's who you are and here's how you vote. Here's your ballot, go to it. And I did. And I left there as I was . . . Obviously in 1975 we were all much younger then. But I left there feeling real good about the electoral process. I felt like I had been included.

And you know, I've not missed a single ballot subsequent. Every time I've been eligible to vote, I have voted. I'm talking about municipal, provincial, and federal votes. And I feel really good about the participation that I've been able to engage in so far. That's what we need a lot more of. We need to have the participation level up.

I think of students, Mr. Speaker, that are often away from the town or city or farm of their upbringing. I'm thinking particularly of post-secondary students trying to vote in their very first election. We've made provisions for how they can vote. We have tried, the last time that *The Election Act* was amended, we tried as diligently as we could to be as inclusive as we could for those students because we knew, New Democrats knew, that if you can get somebody voting for the first time . . . I'm not saying vote New Democrat. That's not what I'm saying at all, Mr. Speaker. If you can . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Better if they do. But that's not, that really isn't the point of what I'm making.

The point I'm making is that we want to have first-time voters vote as soon as they're eligible, and they're far more likely to participate in our democracy each and every election thereafter whenever they can. And that's what we believe in on this side of the House. And I know I heard one of my, I heard one of my colleagues suggest, on this side, suggest that he has even encouraged people to vote for the other party as opposed to not voting at all. And frankly, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I find that a difficult argument to fight against because at least if you're participating, if a voter is participating, they can learn and can make either the same choice if they're satisfied with that or change the choice in a subsequent election. And that's the system that we have. Pay attention to what you ask for because you just might get it.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to be more inclusive, and I can't think of any way of telling young people, first-time voters, that they're welcome to vote; I can't think of any way of doing it other than making them welcome. Let's not create unnecessary roadblocks, unnecessary hoops, unnecessary problems for people who want to vote. Let us make it as seamless and as painless as we can. Let us encourage our future taxpayers, many of them paying taxes already, but let's — the future leaders of our province — let's encourage them to vote. Let's not be so blind as to say we need to make ever more rules.

I haven't heard in this debate, Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard a single cogent argument about how photo ID is going to help. Not a single cogent argument. There isn't a person in this room that can tell me how a photo ID is going to enhance the voting prospect.

Oh, you can cut people out, Mr. Speaker. That's what you can do. You can cut people out from voting. You can disenfranchise people from voting, and that's what photo ID is all about. That's what the Sask Party Bill 161 is all about. Make no mistake. It is solely about disenfranchising the poorest, disenfranchising the voiceless, and disenfranchising the people that they think, on odds, are less likely to vote Sask Party.

I don't know if that's absolutely accurate or not. I don't know. I don't know. I could speculate on it. I could speculate on it, Mr. Speaker, but that would be pointless. I do know, I do know that the only reason for Bill 161 is to disenfranchise certain people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think I've made the points I want to.

I just wanted to . . . Before I close, I want to again go back to the minister responsible who's quoted as saying, "We're going to make sure we continue consulting with the stakeholder groups to ensure that we have all the avenues covered off to be more inclusive versus exclusive."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Sask Party government to be in fact more inclusive. I ask that you withdraw the photo ID, the most offensive part of this election Act. Withdraw that, accept an amendment that would negate the requirement to have photo ID to vote in Saskatchewan, and then we can talk about *The Election Act*.

I invite them to be inclusive. Put some wheels where the words are. Do it. And you have the ability to do that. You can in fact make this Bill much more inclusive and a much better Bill for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that I've missed a number of points. One is, and I regret having missed it because we had a few years back, we had a First Nations ceremony, and we have the First Nations addition to the table here in our legislature. Earlier, last week, we had a ceremony and we welcomed the Métis sash at the table along with the mace. Mr. Speaker, these are tremendously important additions to our legislature.

But what it symbolizes for me is not only our heritage in Saskatchewan but the hope that together we can in fact create a better province for everyone whether . . . regardless of our nationality, our background, our religion, our race, whatever. We have to be more inclusive.

And Métis and Indian people, many of them will have difficulty having photo ID. Many of them will not have a photo ID and indeed, indeed, what Bill 161 does is disenfranchise those very people. Those very people, some of whom . . . I know we've honoured First Nations war vets, Métis war vets, as late as Remembrance Day. And these are men and women that, quite frankly, were good enough to fight for our democracy and yet now we say, but you can't vote. You can risk your life for our democracy but you can't vote. Or some of you may not vote or some of your ancestors, some of your offspring and your grandchildren will not be able to vote because we demand that you have a photo ID.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's just nothing short of shameful that in a province that has so much and in a province that has such a rich history of electoral success . . . I'm not talking who wins, I'm saying our rich history of electoral success is that every four years, give or take, we've had successful elections. The outcome's always been clear; the people of Saskatchewan have always gotten what they've voted for.

I say that even notwithstanding the very first election that I participated in — Grant Devine's Conservatives won more MLAs and Allan Blakeney's New Democrats won more votes. We actually had more votes than the government of the day, but I would argue that that's kind of the way it works. Every once in a while you'll have a bit of an anomaly and I'm not quarrelling with that outcome. I'm saying that the people of Saskatchewan deserve to be trusted. The people of Saskatchewan deserve to have the ability to vote. The people of Saskatchewan need to have their vote counted. They need to be allowed to vote.

Mr. Speaker, *The Election Act* includes a number of changes. I know I've heard some colleagues suggest that what one of the things that we should be moving into is an electronic vote or where people can vote online. Frankly, I think that's worthy of looking at. I wouldn't leap to it personally. I wouldn't leap to it as necessarily the way that we want to proceed, but I'm certainly not opposed to it. We should look at online voting as a way of being more inclusive. That would be a far better measure than what we're seeing under this where we're now requiring to have a photo ID in Saskatchewan. I'd much rather see us look for ways to be inclusive as opposed to exclusive.

And I know that there are problems, Mr. Speaker, with online anything. One needs only look at . . . One of the radio stations did a poll just last week and, lo and behold, members of the governing party's loyal troops knew that this was happening, and members of our troops found out about it only as it was in progress. And the poll results showed favour for the government. And then I started getting reports of our people trying to phone in and the poll being shut down. It was a time limited poll.

So I understand that when you're going to do anything online or on the telephone or something, you have to be very crystal clear on how you're going to do it so that it's fair and so that it's an open and transparent process.

But elections don't tend to sneak up on us. Certainly we know the date of the next general election here, Mr. Speaker. So we need then to simply find ways of being inclusive rather than

exclusive.

[15:30]

You know, Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about my first provincial ballot that I cast when I, in 1975, voted in Broderick. I was a renter then. I voted for Don Faris, is who I voted for. Don Faris was the NDP. We called Don . . . This was in response to a heckle. Don Faris we called landslide Faris because he won in 1975 by 11 votes and then he won again in 1978, this time by 13 votes. So some also referred to Don Faris as double-digit Don, but that was the history of how that went, Mr. Speaker.

But the point I was making about having talked about voting in Broderick, Mr. Speaker. I was a renter then. I was a renter. I suspect I had a power bill with my name on it and a phone bill with my name on it. The details of that escape me. But I know that I did not, in 1975, have a photo ID although, in many ways, I think I would have preferred the photo ID when I was that age than now.

**An Hon. Member:** — A lot of years ago.

**Mr. Trew:** — A lot of years ago, the minister says. And it was a lot of years ago. It was a lifetime ago.

But, Mr. Speaker, with this proposal to introduce photo ID, where does that leave renters? Potentially disenfranchised. It says that if you have the stability of home ownership or condo ownership, you have the stability of location. You're more likely to have a photo ID. But if you're a renter, you know, we're going to just create one more hoop for you to run through. And if you're one of the 20,000 people that use the Regina & District Food Bank, we're going to make it very difficult for you. And if you are even more voiceless than that, we're going to make it almost impossible for you to ever vote.

Mr. Speaker, I say shame. I say shame on that. I say that the government can fix this. The government, just all they have to do is withdraw this misguided notion calling for photo ID. Just withdraw that one incredibly offensive part of *The Election Act* and then we can have a very intelligent discussion around *The Election Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the other reason that we have some question around this is the very election Act and the Chief Electoral Officer that we had . . . An all-party committee did a Canada-wide search and possibly beyond. I'm not certain about that, but certainly a national look. Came up with a unanimous recommendation as to who the Chief Electoral Officer should be in Saskatchewan, only to have the government pull the rug on that and prevented Mr. Wilkie from being appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan.

So we have some doubt, Mr. Speaker, around the government's motives when it comes to elections. We have some doubt as to their desire and willingness to have a more open, inclusive electoral process. We have some doubt about the government's commitment to democracy. We have some doubt where the very commitment that they need to have seems to be missing. The very commitment that says in a democracy that the majority will have its say and the minority will have its way so

that everyone is heard.

And that was in fact the situation with respect to the Chief Electoral Officer. Everyone was heard. A recommendation went unanimously and the government said no.

So I think people would have little difficulty understanding our consternation, our discomfort on this side of the legislature when the government then comes up with a proposal that quite clearly disenfranchises a significant portion of Saskatchewan people. It makes it difficult for many seniors to vote.

I think of my recently passed-on mother-in-law who did not drive, did not drive; had a learner's licence for part of her adult life, but at one point she realized that she did not belong behind the wheel of any moving vehicle. She belonged as a passenger and not as the driver. So why would she then continue to buy a learner's licence? Why would she continue to worry about that? So I don't think she had photo ID, and yet I know she voted in every election. She saw that as an important responsibility and an important duty.

Mr. Speaker, why would we disenfranchise these seniors? Why would the government want to disenfranchise renters? I've already pointed out, renting renters tend not to have a photo ID necessarily with their current address attached to it. You know, these things take a bit of time.

What about people who move six weeks before an election and haven't got their new ID caught up? This can happen to any of us people who simply are in the process of moving, and the timing of that move is not great.

So, Mr. Speaker, Bill 161 is full of . . . It's a Bill respecting *The Election Amendment Act*. It's a Bill that has some problems for us. And it's a Bill that I genuinely — and I mean this — I genuinely invite the Sask Party government to withdraw the requirement that there be photo ID.

The minister has claimed they're talking, they're consulting with the various groups. Well there isn't a group or an individual that said photo ID is going to somehow enhance the voter's ability to vote. There's not one. I defy, I defy you, Minister, I defy you to come up with one group or one individual that has advised you, sir, that photo ID, that photo ID is going to enhance, enhance people's ability to vote. That . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No. Listen, listen carefully. There is not one individual nor one group that has said, photo ID will enhance the voter's ability to vote, will make it easier for them to vote. You may have, you may have someone that said, we can cut some people out or we can make it difficult for a certain segment of our population to vote. But nobody has straight-faced recommended that photo ID is going to make it easier to vote.

So I'm urging, withdraw that most offensive part of this election Act amendment, and you will see us co-operating in a very real way in getting this Bill to committee and seeing that it proceeds so that, if there are good things in the Bill, it can happen.

The Bill . . . It'd be nice to have it scrutinized in committee. It would be nice to be able to ask the questions where we can get

the answers directly back, Mr. Speaker. But as it stands, there is just no way that we on this side can support any wrong-headed notion that demands that electors have to have photo ID. It disenfranchises a significant part of our population. If it disenfranchises one person, that's one too many in a democracy. And it clearly is going to disenfranchise many, many, many one persons. I predict it will be thousands of people that this Bill would disenfranchise from voting. And I say, shame to that.

So, Mr. Speaker, to give the government time to consider this request to withdraw that offensive part, that photo ID part, I'm going to move that adjournment of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 161. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

## Bill No. 162

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hickie that **Bill No. 162 — *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to weigh in on debate here and in discussion in the Assembly here today on Bill No. 162, *An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, Mr. Speaker. And we have the Minister of Municipal Affairs in the Assembly here today and we appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, because we need to bend his ear and allow him to recognize the error that has occurred with this Bill being brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm going to attach in many ways to the statements of the fine words from the member from Regina Coronation Park, Mr. Speaker, who has so eloquently and so passionately, Mr. Speaker, spoken about the disenfranchisement of the many, Mr. Speaker, in voting and being part of their democratic democracy here, Mr. Speaker. And it's something that we're concerned about, Mr. Speaker.

So when we're looking at 162, there are some other provisions that we will speak to, and we'll speak specifically to some of those. There's one aspect of the Bill that we're able to likely support, Mr. Speaker, with some further questions. But there's the crux of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is the piece that provides a challenge to so many, Mr. Speaker, to exercise their franchise, their democratic right, Mr. Speaker, and prevents them from being able to vote in the next election and subsequent elections, Mr. Speaker, and that's a concern. And now they're doing this of course at the municipal level, as well at the provincial level which allows discussion at this point in time at both of those levels.

We see a government here right now, the Sask Party government, that has run roughshod over democratic processes in short order, Mr. Speaker. We see them intervene on the hiring process of an independent officer, the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we see the long-standing court case go on, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the millions of money that it's alleged that this party holds on to, Mr. Speaker, that as suggested are rightfully the Progressive Conservatives' dollars, Mr. Speaker — an example again of a government, if allegations are correct, that are fundamentally intervening in our democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

And so we look at this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and we are very concerned with the implications for Saskatchewan people, the ramifications for the many that lose their franchise through such a decision, Mr. Speaker. And we see it as nothing more than a politically shrewd attack on individuals, Mr. Speaker, who have in many ways been attacked by this government.

Because in a relatively short few years, Mr. Speaker, with reckless government and mismanagement, but as well misplaced priorities, Mr. Speaker, we've seen this Sask Party government fail so many, Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan; so many that in fact it would appear they're now bringing forward legislation, Mr. Speaker, to prevent and limit those very individuals who may have been impacted and affected by the poor decisions of this government from exercising their franchise, Mr. Speaker. And we see that as absolutely inappropriate, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at the many that this government has failed, Mr. Speaker, we need not look very far, Mr. Speaker, in the day that we have here today where the food banks of Saskatchewan, the Regina Food Bank, and our universities have partnered, Mr. Speaker, to produce a report and a study — an even-handed study — of the circumstances within Saskatchewan as it relates to cost of living, Mr. Speaker. And what we see is a massive erosion, Mr. Speaker, of quality of life for so many, Mr. Speaker, across our province. We see massive increases to food, to rent, to utilities, Mr. Speaker.

And we're hearing from those individuals on a daily basis as to how limiting and how challenging this is for so many, Mr. Speaker. And this isn't just students. Of course it's families, Mr. Speaker. It's seniors across this province who have worked so hard to build the fine province that we should continue to be good stewards of, Mr. Speaker, and leave in better shape than . . . when we're so privileged to be making decisions that have a profound impact on our future.

[15:45]

So we see this as a shrewd move to disenfranchise, Mr. Speaker, a mean-spirited move, Mr. Speaker, to disenfranchise many. We see it as anti-democratic, Mr. Speaker. And it's something that Saskatchewan people are hugely concerned with and speaking out about, Mr. Speaker, something that Saskatchewan people are concerned that their government is limiting the accountability that's exercised through an election, Mr. Speaker, at any level, Mr. Speaker, whether that's provincial or municipal, Mr. Speaker.

Many seniors across this province are sharing with us that

they're feeling betrayed on so many aspects, Mr. Speaker, in health care, Mr. Speaker, on the side of cost of living. And we see this as a shrewd move to potentially eliminate so many seniors who have built our province, Mr. Speaker, raised their families, contributed to our province both economically and socially, Mr. Speaker. And now they're preventing those individuals from coming out and voting, Mr. Speaker.

And I know this government governs by polls, Mr. Speaker. They recognize who doesn't support them, Mr. Speaker. And certainly they'd be recognizing that so many, Mr. Speaker, that are impacted by their mismanagement and misplaced priorities are not going to be supporting them, and then their move is to take away their democratic right, to take away their democratic franchise, Mr. Speaker. We think it's a deplorable act of this government. We believe the objectives and intention are deplorable, and we see the result would be a shame, Mr. Speaker.

So it's an interesting time. We know that, we know that this comes from the list of broken promises from this government. And they're hearing from so many who are frustrated and outraged and protesting, whether it's outside of their offices or at their local political events, Mr. Speaker, and having their voice heard. And then what we see is a government that's going to try to shut down those individuals from exercising their franchise, from voting in elections, Mr. Speaker.

Well we're not going to tolerate this being passed without one heck of a fight, Mr. Speaker, because it relates to our very health of our democracy, Mr. Speaker, and something that we're going to make sure we're going to do our part to protect, Mr. Speaker.

When we think about the photo ID piece, there's so many individuals that don't have a driver's ID, Mr. Speaker, young and old, Mr. Speaker. We can talk about so many seniors that may no longer have a driver's licence. For this government to now suggest that that's somehow required for them to vote is irresponsible and simply can't be trusted at face value, Mr. Speaker. We recognize the true intentions. It's shrewd, it's specific, and it's to keep individuals who are marginalized from . . . in many cases, lower socio-economics, but not specifically, Mr. Speaker, because this is a challenge that's going to affect individuals with mobility as well and right across the piece, Mr. Speaker, and preventing them from coming out to the polls.

You can hear, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite start to get a little noisier as we speak here, Mr. Speaker. They likely feel the pressure, Mr. Speaker, because if a fraction of the individuals who are phoning our offices on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, from their constituencies, Mr. Speaker, were phoning theirs as well, then it would put a lot of pressure and a lot of heat on these individuals.

What we're concerned is that they've been able to very specifically identify who they have hurt, Mr. Speaker, who they don't care about within our society, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to make sure that those individuals aren't the individuals who are coming out to vote, Mr. Speaker.

We can look at . . . Basically it goes across the piece, all walks of life, Mr. Speaker. We see students that are concerned with



the rising costs of tuition, Mr. Speaker, their rent and utilities. The housing side of the equation as it relates to students is incredibly onerous, Mr. Speaker, and increasing in disproportional ways, Mr. Speaker, burdening this generation with more debt than any generation before it, Mr. Speaker, challenging, creating huge challenge to enter into home ownership, Mr. Speaker, and into positions to really grow their, grow their families and live their lives in Saskatchewan in the manner that they should, Mr. Speaker. We should be able to be enhancing the quality of life in Saskatchewan, not driving it backwards and then disenfranchising those individuals from voting, Mr. Speaker. And we need to recognize that.

So we see across the piece, Mr. Speaker, whether it's students, Mr. Speaker, whether it's the poor, whether it's working families, whether it's seniors, we see so many individuals that have been impacted negatively by this government, very directly by this government and certainly fully contemplated, Mr. Speaker. A Saskatchewan that in many ways doesn't include progress for all, Mr. Speaker, doesn't reflect the needs and challenges for seniors within this province.

We talked about students, and we talked about debt load, Mr. Speaker. The other aspect that we should be talking about is the barriers to so many students, Mr. Speaker, that are now in place that are preventing so many from even going forward and having the opportunity to study, to pursue opportunities from an educational perspective, and to then subsequently from that to contribute to our province, Mr. Speaker. And that's how it works — contribute to us economically, Mr. Speaker.

And we need to make sure that those are the very individuals that are allowed to exercise their franchise, Mr. Speaker. And in fact what we should be doing with those individuals is we should be handing them new roles and taking a leadership role within our democratic process, Mr. Speaker, and shaping our society, Mr. Speaker, and shaping the bright future that should be our Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we shouldn't be eliminating their voices, Mr. Speaker.

We should be looking at new ways to harness the energies and the education and the abilities and the perspectives of our young, youngest within our province, Mr. Speaker, not disenfranchising them and putting in mechanisms that are going to prevent them from showing up at the polling station, Mr. Speaker, in your constituency or mine, to cast their ballot.

And when I talk about disenfranchising somebody from a vote, I don't care who somebody votes for in the sense of protecting democracy, Mr. Speaker. The voters need to be able to make that decision. That's their decision to make. But to very specifically go after very select groups that this government has hammered in their short term in office, Mr. Speaker, and then prevent them from showing up at the polls at your polling stations, Mr. Speaker, or mine, is inappropriate and it's deplorable.

When we look at the discussion as far as protecting democracy, and certainly not far off from a government that has, as I've said, run roughshod, Mr. Speaker, over democracy every chance that it appears to be given, whether that's intervening in the hiring of a Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Speaker, whether that's the worrisome allegations that relate to that Premier and that

party sitting on millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, of the former Progressive Conservatives, Mr. Speaker. And as the allegations lay it out, if those are the case, Mr. Speaker, a party that in fact is preventing — and those individuals that are named in that lawsuit — preventing the health and well-being of our democracy here in Saskatchewan, preventing a party from being able to function, Mr. Speaker.

So we see it on so many fronts, and now we see them going after the very individual voters. And, Mr. Speaker, what we believe is that democracy . . . And what we need to be looking at is ways to make sure that we're healthier. We need to see how we can improve voter turnout, how we can be exercising and utilizing new technologies, Mr. Speaker, and looking for best practice in jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, that allow more individuals to vote.

We need to look at questions of mobility, Mr. Speaker, challenges of socio-economic circumstance, Mr. Speaker, challenges that relate to seniors, Mr. Speaker. And we need to make sure that we're in fact enhancing their opportunity to participate by voting, exercise their franchise, Mr. Speaker, and take the leadership role, Mr. Speaker, that they always have, Mr. Speaker, in this province. And we don't see that under this Bill.

So we see a shrewd act of this Premier, Mr. Speaker, trying to prevent many for whom he's failed from preventing in the next election. And I've gone through the list, whether that's renters or seniors or young families, Mr. Speaker, working people. And the list goes on.

We talk about the hunters and fishers, Mr. Speaker, that have been disgraced by this government as it relates to the sell-off of habitat lands, Mr. Speaker, and the 30,000 Wildlife Federation members across this province, Mr. Speaker; the fact that a new minister was brought in to this portfolio and has done nothing, Mr. Speaker, to address this circumstance and correct this circumstance, Mr. Speaker. Why a sell-off of lands potentially at over 3 million acres, Mr. Speaker, potentially at 3 million acres, Mr. Speaker? Removing the debate and discussion from this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and simply now on the whim of that minister, Mr. Speaker.

And we see a new Minister of Environment, and we see no action on that front, Mr. Speaker. And I know so many hunters, fishers throughout his constituency, Mr. Speaker, who were expecting more from the new minister, Mr. Speaker. And yet now we see this government, this government, Mr. Speaker, moving forward with a legislation that in fact is going to disenfranchise many for whom they failed, which include First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker, on that same very piece of legislation and on so many other pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

So we see a circumstance here in our province under this Sask Party Premier and government, Mr. Speaker, that seems more intent on governing by polls, on running roughshod over democracy to their shrewd political benefit than serving the public for whom they're accountable to, Mr. Speaker.

And this is of huge concern to Saskatchewan people. And I know it causes huge concern for the many members on that side

of the Assembly who are getting call after call into their offices as it relates to the failures in the health care, the broken promises across the piece, the pressures as it relates to raising a family, Mr. Speaker, and the many pressures in affordability.

I hear a couple of the members shout out that they don't receive many phone calls. But of course what we know, Mr. Speaker, is that our offices field call after call, Mr. Speaker, in many cases from their constituents, from their constituents. And I think it's fair to say an increase in calls that's probably representative of the same increase in social assistance numbers, Mr. Speaker, that we see under this government — massive increases to those individuals reliant on government that are on social assistance, Mr. Speaker, that have challenges to the quality of their life, Mr. Speaker.

And of course this disconnects, Mr. Speaker, from the cheery spin that this Premier spends millions on, Mr. Speaker. There's a real disconnect on fronts like that or disconnects when we talk about . . . This probably connects to when we see, I believe, is that almost 10,000 increase for the Regina Food Bank here this year, the food bank usage up by the thousands across this province, Mr. Speaker, and the pressures that that . . . the pressures, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan families are feeling as a result of these failed policies, misplaced priorities of this Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker.

So what does this Premier do, Mr. Speaker? Well he does some polling, and he recognizes that in some very specific groups — seniors, young families, young individuals, those living on the margins, those trying to find work, Mr. Speaker, those on social assistance — that in fact they are not going to be voting for him, Mr. Speaker. And so what does this Premier do? Well he eliminates the opportunity for them to exercise their franchise, once again intervening in our democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

So we're concerned by this, Mr. Speaker. And we see that it's going to be harder for many to cast their ballot, exercise their franchise under the legislation as proposed here, Mr. Speaker, a legislation that we see as not only politically shrewd but mean-spirited and not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people because it's not in the best interest of democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Because it's fine for us to have a debate in this Assembly and for them to lay forward their platform and for us to lay forward ours. And if it's going to be as simple as the Premier saying everything's great in Saskatchewan and running expensive ads to do that, while we'll stand up on the side of making sure that our economy's sound and healthy, Mr. Speaker, making sure that we have progress for the many, Mr. Speaker, making sure that the social well-being of Saskatchewan people is being progressed, making sure that quality of life is something that's improving, not deteriorating.

Making sure that students are finding opportunities and as accessible as they can be, Mr. Speaker, to pursue further education and contribute subsequently to our fine economy and to build our fine province, Mr. Speaker. To make sure that seniors live with the health care system that they deserve, Mr. Speaker, and to make sure that they're protected from an income security side of the equation and not put in a situation, Mr. Speaker, like so many are where they can't make ends meet

and they're making decisions at the grocery store, Mr. Speaker. It's something that is hard to see.

And it's in rural Saskatchewan, and it's in other circumstances across our urban environments. So if we're going to stand up and make sure that we're representing those individuals, I'll take that debate any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

But the sad state of affairs is that this Premier's trying to shift the political landscape, trying to shift the . . . And it's not even the political landscape, Mr. Speaker. He's trying to shift our democratic landscape to make it less democratic, Mr. Speaker, and to actually prevent so many that he's harmed in his few short years, Mr. Speaker, from coming out and having their say, from coming out and saying no, that's not right, Mr. Premier, when you went and sold off all those habitat lands. No, that's not right, Mr. Speaker, that you can rack up the costs of rent on individuals and harm families the way that you are.

The many, Mr. Speaker, that might say, Mr. Premier, it's not fair for you to be spending millions telling me how cheery Saskatchewan is when I'm making decisions as it relates to the food my children are going to eat at home. And that's the kind of election that it will be for so many, Mr. Speaker.

And of course there's another side of the discussion in Saskatchewan that we're always proud to also engage in and be proud of, Mr. Speaker. And we're always excited to talk about making sure that the economic record is one of pride, Mr. Speaker, making sure that Saskatchewan people are served well, something that we're simply not seeing under this reckless Premier, Mr. Speaker.

So the list of individuals who have been failed by this Premier is long. And there's many individuals that certainly wouldn't be casting their vote for him and his party, Mr. Speaker. But we believe that they have the right — whoever they vote for, them or us or whoever — to show up at the polls and to make that as accessible as we can, Mr. Speaker. And that's our responsibility to make sure that the health of our democracy's protected because we simply believe, Mr. Speaker, we're at our best when all are participating in the choosing of governments, in the choosing of the subsequent laws and platforms, Mr. Speaker. And to drive us backwards as a jurisdiction and to remove our democracy, Mr. Speaker, is something that we see as hugely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

So what I'd like to say at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, there's some other provisions of this Bill that we certainly can lend some support to. But it's really clouded when we have the whole crux of this Bill is to eliminate many, Mr. Speaker, from voting — seniors, young people, those living on the . . . [inaudible] . . . right across Saskatchewan — from voting in the next election, Mr. Speaker. We're going to stand up and make sure that they can be served.

Certainly as it relates to some of the term limits that are being proposed, Mr. Speaker, there's possibly some merit in this and something that we can likely support. But we need to make sure on those fronts is that the consultation has occurred, unlike when the habitat lands were sold off and the minister pretended

that she had consulted with First Nations and Métis and with hunters and fishers and with environmentalists, Mr. Speaker, and different groups across Saskatchewan, landowners, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that that consultation has gone on in that front. Because we know at one point in time, there was some opposition that this government expressed to moving to four-year limits, Mr. Speaker. We need to understand fully what that opposition was, how this legislation has addressed that opposition, Mr. Speaker.

But all of these are sort of secondary to the main debate that needs to occur on Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, and that is that we have a government that's again running roughshod over democracy, that's removing democracy from Saskatchewan, that's taking away the democratic right and the franchise of so many across this province, and doing it for shrewd political benefit, Mr. Speaker, and certainly not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. And we'll stand opposed to that. We'll continue to stand up for democracy, Mr. Speaker. And I'm certain in doing so, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan's better off when all Saskatchewan people have a say in how it's governed.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, with many questions on this Bill and with many, many, many members that want to speak to this Bill with the amount of opposition that we hear from across this province, I will adjourn debate on Bill No. 162, Mr. Speaker, and allow another person to speak. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 162. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 159

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 159 — *The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak about Bill No. 159, *An Act to amend The University of Regina Act*.

The reasons for this particular Bill have been set out by the minister and by various comments from the president of the University of Regina, Dr. Vianne Timmons. But I think her simple quote says it all. She says, "The University of Regina continually strives to increase our administrative efficiency and enhance our productivity as outlined in our strategic plan, *māmahōkamātowin: Our Work, Our People, Our Communities*."

And, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the University of Regina, as stated in their plan, is that they are intended to "... position the University of Regina at the centre of this new Saskatchewan, rooted in and responding to the needs and aspirations of our

students, our people and our communities and reaching out to the world around us." And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they then set out what their goals are, their vision, their mission, values, quite a number of points.

But on page 6 of this University of Regina strategic plan from July 2009, they talk about a goal of increasing our administrative efficiency and enhancing productivity. And it talks about what a complex organization a middle-sized university like the University of Regina is and how it has many, many reporting and audit requirements as well as all of the other rules and things that are in place.

But, Mr. Speaker, this particular legislation that we have here, this Bill 159 appears to be trying to put *The University of Regina Act* in a similar place as was done previously with *The University of Saskatchewan Act*, especially as it relates to the chancellor of the university, the issue of the visitor, and the senate.

And I think it's important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reflect somewhat on the history of these types of institutions that are located within universities and why, at this stage early in the 21st century, there are some requirements that require change and also in that process to identify where there may be some questions that are asked as this particular Bill is moved forward.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, universities are old institutions in the Western world. Many of them were established in the Middle Ages, the 12th, 13th, 14th century. And in many ways, the structure of the universities was created at that time, quite often coming out of the medieval church organization. And so what happened is that in many places the universities developed structures of control and of influence and decision making that were layer on layer. And so you end up with some of the most complex decision-making structures in our community are those decision-making structures within the university.

What we have here is an attempt, I think, working with all of the various people involved to make sure that this structure continues to follow some of the traditions that are there. But it also recognizes that as the numbers of university graduates in the community increase, as the diverse places that these people go and where they work and how they serve not just in Saskatchewan but right around the world, as all of these things happen, that there needs to be some changes around how the legislation is written.

So let's take a look at the Bill and the changes that are there. If we follow the short title . . . And if people want to follow along, they can go on to the legislative website and look up Bill 159 and read some of these particular sections as they proceed.

But one of the first things that happens in this legislation is that the section 9 of the existing provision respecting the visitor is repealed. Now the visitor is an old term that we don't use very much any more. And in fact when you read the information provided from the University of Regina, they in fact have never used the visitor since it's been the University of Regina.

But the visitor is effectively a judge who is outside of the whole structure who can make decisions around disputes within the university. And under the present structure at the university and

what was formerly at the University of Saskatchewan, that visitor was the Lieutenant Governor. What happened, though, any time an issue arose that was supposed to go to the visitor, Lieutenant Governor had the ability to refer it, and they immediately referred it to a court and a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench.

And so effectively what this Bill does is eliminate the term visitor, the concept of visitor, and says that if there are disputes they will go not through the Lieutenant Governor as visitor, but they'll go directly to a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench.

Now for lovers of old institutional methods of resolving disputes, it's a bit sad to lose the term, visitor, and the position of visitor. But in all practicality it doesn't make any change for the people who are involved in disputes. The disputes will be resolved the same way. So that's the first change.

The second change relates to the number of people who are required to sign to have a special meeting of convocation. Now convocation is all the graduates of the University of Regina, and I think I saw that the number is somewhere around 56,000 people. And right now if 25 of those graduates signed a petition effectively — we're used to that term here in this legislature — they could force the calling by the chancellor of a special meeting. This legislation is going to double that number to 50. Now I'm sure it's still quite a small number compared to the 56,000 people who have convoked at the University of Regina, but it's obviously setting out the sense that if this is going to happen, it needs to have a larger group of people than is presently there under the rules. So that's a second provision.

The next provision relates to the chancellor, and it effectively sets out how the chancellor should be selected. And this is one of the areas where there has been some discussion about the process. It was traditional that, and under the legislation as it sits right now, that the chancellor would be selected by convocation. What that meant was there had to be a mailing to all of these people that they could locate who had ever been graduates of the University of Regina. And the estimate is that this mailing alone just to send out the ballots would cost about \$50,000 each time a chancellor was selected.

The proposal in this legislation is to have that job done by the senate which is a group of just around 100 people and reflects . . . It's made up of representatives of various groups that are within the university and within the community. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this proposal appears to make sense in the sense that it will still get voices from many different angles and different spots within the university. What it does lose though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this ability to keep all of the graduates, all of the people who convoked, informed of what's happening at the university.

[16:15]

Now I think when this legislation was created about 35, 36 years ago and it was built on the University of Saskatchewan legislation, there wasn't the same emphasis on keeping track of alumni through an alumni relations type of group that now exists at the University of Regina. And so one way for the university to do that was to make sure that the convocation list was as up-to-date as possible, because the Act required that

people would have to be notified when there was a change in chancellor. And I think, I'm not exactly sure, but I think the term of the chancellor's election was five years, and so that meant for sure that you ended up having to contact everybody who had convoked at the university every five years.

Now the proposal that's in this legislation I think is reasonable, and it clearly eliminates the forced spending of money to mail out the ballot. Now I think what we'll see is that kind of contact being replaced by the alumni magazine, by alumni requests, by things like that, but it won't have the same necessity of doing it in the process of electing a chancellor.

So, Mr. Speaker, there may be some people who aren't totally at ease with this, but practically it seems to make sense. And so we have a whole number of the sections in this legislation that relate to this adjustment to how the chancellor is selected and dealing with this list of all people who have convoked.

Now another area in the legislation relates to the senate and how members of senate are selected. A certain number are selected as representatives of all the graduates in a particular district in Saskatchewan, and the changes will make it such that those people who select that person are the graduates located in that district as opposed to graduates at large or graduates throughout all of the possible electoral areas, and so that requires that the legislation be changed to reflect that.

Once again it's an administrative efficiency that seems to make sense. The goal clearly is to have as much representation as possible from those people who are interested in being involved in university governance after they've graduated, but at the same time not being unduly expensive and difficult for the university itself to administer.

Another section relates to how the senate itself operates, and effectively the rules are going to be kept in the senate bylaws as opposed to the legislation. This will allow for the ability to make amendments where that's required, through the senate, as opposed to coming back to the legislature for those kinds of procedural amendments. That's very similar to much of the corporate legislation that we do in this legislature, and that also seems to make sense.

So when you end up with all of these different pieces, what you have is 21st century legislation that attempts to still capture the whole history of the university with all of the complex centres of power, if I can put it that way, that operate at the university, but doing it in a way that is more efficient in cost and also in a more practical way.

So the purpose obviously of doing all this is to make sure that the university is strong and can fulfill its purpose of providing careful teaching of students, that it's providing activities for students, so that it can provide research for the whole community, for the country. And any time any of this kind of legislation comes forward, we have to look at it very carefully to make sure that we aren't disrupting the balances that have developed over many years.

I know that there have been some questions raised, but I also know that there's a fair consensus on moving forward with the things that I've just described. But I also know that there are

areas where we are going to continue to have to ask some questions because it may be that there are one or two of the suggested solutions that don't quite match what everybody thought was going to happen.

And so I know that I may well have another chance to speak at this at another time. But I know some of my colleagues will want to speak about this after we've had some further conversations with people both at the university, but also those who are members of convocations. So at this point, I will adjourn the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Regina Lakeview has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 159, *The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 160

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 160 — *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to put my comments on the record with regard to the amendments that are being proposed by the Sask Party government to the Human Rights Code.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that there are a number of concerns that have arisen as a result of the Bill that was introduced into the legislature and the comments that were made by the minister. Mr. Speaker, at present the Human Rights Tribunal system is an independent, quasi-judicial provincial body that adjudicates human rights complaints under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. The tribunal consists of a Chair and there are appointed members. Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission, when they believe that there's enough evidence that a right may have been violated under the legislation, has the ability to refer that complaint to the Human Rights Tribunal to be adjudicated.

Mr. Speaker, what the government is proposing to do is to eliminate human right tribunals in the province of Saskatchewan and replace them with a court system. What would in essence happen is that if a complaint were launched, if the commission determined that there was enough grounds to proceed with the complaint, it would be sent off to a Court of Queen's Bench judge to make a ruling.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it appears from the legislation that we will be the only province in Canada that is getting rid of the tribunal system. I understand from speaking to experts in the whole area of human rights that Quebec, I believe it was, at one stage had the process that the government is proposing here in this legislation. They experimented with the notion of getting rid of

the tribunals and going to the courts, and then they determined that this was not an appropriate way to deal with human rights complaints and they abandoned that notion some time ago. At the end of the day, the Quebec government determined that courts were not an appropriate place for human rights inquiries.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that there are people who are experts in the human rights area that are concerned with what the government is proposing with the amendments to this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I noted with some care that the minister indicated that in the last few years there have been a reduction in the number of cases that are going before a tribunal. And in fact I believe in this fiscal year there have only been five, if I recall from the minister's comments.

Mr. Speaker, I think that people who are experts in the human rights field believe that this notion of scrapping a Human Rights Tribunal along with the rules — and I understand that they're more informal rules of evidence in favour of a Court of Queen's Bench — will basically create some difficulties for complainants who may not be as sophisticated as some people in the province of Saskatchewan, and that this will become a more onerous process for those complainants. And the rules will be quite different than the rules that are presently before a Human Rights Tribunal, Mr. Speaker.

Presently in the province, discrimination complaints can be based upon race, colour, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, marital status, family status, place of origin, or ancestry. And I understand that the Human Rights Code covers a number of contexts for those complaints because discrimination may be in a variety of ways. It may appear when it comes to tenancy or employment, employment advertisements, publications, public services and facilities, purchase of property, and discrimination by unions or associations.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister in his remarks thinks that this is groundbreaking, that we're about to launch into a groundbreaking way of dealing with human rights complaints in the province of Saskatchewan. But I note that the groundbreaker, Quebec, scrapped their groundbreaking decision to go to the courts some years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the other area when you review the legislation that is concerning is that the government is proposing that complaints will go to mediation. And, Mr. Speaker, I think mediation works when you have two equal parties in a mediation process. But when you don't have equal parties in terms of their power, place in society, mediation may not be as substantive, as useful as mediation would be for two parties that are fundamentally equal when it comes to their status or ability to have these kinds of complaints negotiated. So I'm not convinced at the moment, and I think we'll have to hear more from the government that mediation is necessarily going to be what the government is suggesting it might be.

Mr. Speaker, it appears as though the Human Rights Commission wants to get into a lot of education, and that's important. Education's important, but the reality is that there are still grounds for discrimination in the province of

Saskatchewan, and discrimination is moving in terms of how and why people are discriminated against. And while education is important, there will always be a need to be able to adjudicate these kinds of matters. And that's why when you think about this province, we were the first province in the country to have a bill of rights. It was under a Saskatchewan Prime Minister that Canada introduced a bill of rights. And when you think about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we are a country in the globe that has a pretty substantive human rights record.

And I would not want to see a piece of legislation that would water down our ability to have human rights that have been in this province for decades come to a point where people would be reluctant to go to the commission because they would have to go before a Court of Queen's Bench judge because the tribunal system wasn't there.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that — and the argument has been made — that the tribunal system is time-consuming and takes some time. If the government wanted to deal with that issue . . . And the argument goes that lawyers that are appointed to adjudicate these kinds of complaints are busy people; they have private law practices. But if the government wanted to, they could appoint a group of lawyers who would basically be tasked with dealing with human rights adjudication, if they wanted to do that. I'm not convinced that a Court of Queen's Bench judge will be any more timely when it comes to adjudicating these kinds of matters, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

Certainly that is one change that I could see myself being open to: an appointment of a group of lawyers who could adjudicate these matters in a more timely manner, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. And I've been able to look at some of the comments that have been made on various blogs in the province about the amendments that the government is suggesting in this Bill. And it's worrisome to see some of those comments in support of amendments to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission or *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

Because many of the speakers in these blogs, if they had their way, there would not be a Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission whatsoever because they believe that it takes away from their ability to engage in what they call free speech. But we all know that, you know, what may be considered one person's version of free speech may be discrimination against an individual, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think the other thing that is worrisome is that, with this particular piece of legislation, is that we had a Human Rights Tribunal in 2009 that ruled that marriage commissioners were obliged to uphold the law and perform their duties to provide civil marriages to all Saskatchewan citizens, regardless of their personal beliefs. And, Mr. Speaker, what I'm talking about is marriage commissioners who are appointed under a piece of legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

And these marriage commissioners felt that they should not, because of their own set of personal beliefs, should not have to marry same-sex couples, Mr. Speaker. And we know what the

government's response to that tribunal ruling was. And the government's response was to refer two pieces of legislation to the Court of Appeal that would allow marriage commissioners to basically continue to discriminate against some Saskatchewan citizens based upon their own personal beliefs. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not what human rights are about.

And it's certainly not what human rights are about when it comes to citizens who are appointed by the state or the province or the government to uphold pieces of legislation. We can't pick and choose when we perform a marriage, based upon our own personal beliefs. That is in fact, Mr. Speaker, discrimination.

Now that was the government's response to a ruling by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal and it was a tribunal decision that they didn't like. So it's a little difficult to be not cynical about the government's motives in this particular case, and when it comes to amendments to the Human Rights Code in the province of Saskatchewan.

We have a number of questions about how these changes are going to work. As I said, the current process allows people to appeal a decision by the Human Rights Commission to the tribunal, even when the commission believes that there is no merit. But if the complainant continues to believe that there is a case, they have an opportunity to have their case referred to a Human Rights Tribunal.

The new system, as I understand it, will involve the use of lawyers appointed by the Human Rights Commission representing complainants in court. The question is, how does this work in cases where the commission itself has decided that a complaint has no merit and the complainant wants to appeal? It appears as though the decision of the commission will be final when it comes to dismissing a complaint.

Another question is, who's going to represent the complainant? Does the complainant have to go find their own lawyer? I understand from the minister that these people will be paid for, but if I find my own lawyer, will my lawyer be paid for? That's not clear. And I guess the other question is that there are a lot of people who may have been discriminated against that may have some difficulty finding a lawyer to represent them, particularly if they're marginalized, and they're trying to seek some form of justice.

It's also important to note, and I've said this earlier, that the assumption is that courts are a quicker process. And I'm not convinced that the courts are a quicker process. There are times when cases are dismissed under the Charter because people have not had access to a fair and speedy trial, Mr. Speaker. And as I said before, it's true that there had been delays with the current system, but I do believe that the commission could have four lawyers or five lawyers that could be available to speed up this particular work.

The other issue that's contained in the legislation is the notion that you now will have only one year to determine whether or not someone has, in your view, violated your particular human right. And at present it's two, and the government's — two years — and the government's reducing that to one year. And I think that we need to consider that change very carefully as well because there may be circumstances where a complainant may

not be able to file within a one-year period. And it appears as though, and you look at other pieces of legislation, that we're trying to extend the amount of time that people have to file a complaint, not reduce it.

Mr. Speaker, it is noted and the commission noted that it was important to have experts reviewing these cases that reflect a diversity of society. And I think it's a pretty simple fact that judges and their appointments are not necessarily reflective of a diverse society. I think it's fair that governments have worked hard to have more women appointed as judges. Governments have worked hard to see more First Nations and Métis people appointed as judges. But we're still not there in terms of having a judiciary that is truly reflective of our society.

And we know that when we have a diverse group of people who might be sitting in these kinds of situations, their views and where they come from sometimes inform and affect their ability to understand the life experiences of others. And so I wonder what kind of life experiences will the people who are going to adjudicate these complaints, particularly Court of Queen's Bench judges, what kind of life experiences do they have? Who's going to be assigning these judges to these cases? How will it be determined that these judges have the necessary expertise in terms of human rights law and the necessary life experiences to appreciate the people that may appear before them?

Mr. Speaker, I think that there was an interesting article that appeared in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, and it was written by Ken Norman who is a professor of law at the University of Saskatchewan law college. Ken Norman is someone who would be considered in our country to be an expert when it comes to human rights. And I think it's fair to say that Professor Norman has some very significant concerns with the decision or the legislation that we see before this House. And he is suggesting that the Government of Saskatchewan is marching to a different drum, and it's a distant drum in terms of human rights complaints in the province.

Mr. Speaker, with that I think it's fair to say that there are more people that need to be consulted with. There are human rights experts across the country that have been keenly involved in following Saskatchewan and its Human Rights Code and its Human Rights Commission. There's no question that at times we have been leaders in the whole area of human rights and our Human Rights Commission. I'm not convinced that this legislation continues that kind of leadership. We need to be fully knowledgeable about what's happening in the whole area of human rights.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just think about the newcomers that are coming to our province. And they're coming because of our immigrant nominee program. And it's my view that with the diversity of the province that there may well be more complaints that may be coming forward as a result of the diversity that our province is reflecting.

Mr. Speaker, many of the newcomers that are coming obviously don't have English as their first language. English may be their third, fourth, fifth, or sixth language. They are coming to the province. They're working in workplaces. And I really question whether or not this legislation, as it's presently proposed by the

government, is going to make it more difficult for those newcomers to go forward with complaints or less difficult. And my belief at the moment is that the legislation as it presently stands is going to make it more onerous for people who may have human rights complaints.

Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly going to be interested in seeing what a province like Manitoba, which has a very large immigrant nominee program, I'm going to be looking at their legislation and talking to some of their human rights experts. Because they've had newcomers in their province for some time and we need to see how many of the complaints that the Human Rights Commission in Manitoba is dealing with are race-based or ethnically based and how many of them are complaints that are being put forward by newcomers in the province because I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to have to make our way through a very changing and diverse province in Saskatchewan. And we're going to have to have processes in place that allow people to confront discrimination.

And I'm not convinced, and there may be some very well-meaning people that think getting rid of the tribunal system is going to be much better in terms of advancing human rights in the province of Saskatchewan, but I'm not convinced that blowing up or scrapping the Human Rights Tribunal — which is, as I understand, arms-length from the commission — and replacing it with a court system is going to advance human rights.

And my final point, Mr. Speaker, is I think that this legislation also puts a lot of discretion on the part of the Chief Commissioner or the person that the Chief Commissioner decides to devolve his powers to. And I am not convinced that we should leave it to the commissioner to be determining with finality which cases go forward and which cases don't. I think that that is problematic because once again, with all due respect to the Chief Commissioner, the Chief Commissioner is a judge. He comes from a particular background. He has a particular view of the world, and it's my view that you need to have a diverse view of the world when you're dealing with these kinds of matters.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to consult with folks, particularly in Manitoba. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 160, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

[16:45]

## Bill No. 157

[The Assembly resumed debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 157 — *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am glad to rise in my place this afternoon to participate in the debate on Bill No. 157, *An Act to amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*.

There are a number of things that are interesting about this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly it's a fairly complex Bill, as one might expect of legislation with this scope. It's got implications for a number of players on a number of levels. It's also coming forward under the aegis of the New West Partnership and harmonizing certain of our regulatory regime with those that exist in Alberta.

And of course there's also a number of housekeeping measures contained in this legislation, measures that relate to more gender-inclusive language, changing department to ministry, etc., etc. So that's I guess the sort of broad thrust of the remarks I'll be making on this legislation this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But to return first to the question of the complexity of the Bill, certainly it's important to maintain legislation that is current and applicable to the present environment, legislation where for example one of the items relates to clarifying between oil and gas waste and waste that is not related, pure and simple, to the functioning of oil and gas production and extraction. That is something that is clarified in this legislation.

And again as problems arise with these things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important for the government of the day to step forward and provide that clarity in the legal language and to straighten the matter out. As well, with the interest on the part of the government of the day in terms of changing the reference to departments to ministries, that of course goes through the legislation and necessitates a number of change. Again not exactly something to write home about there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Where we find it interesting is that the government is proclaiming this as a piece that modernizes the business and regulatory systems targeted at the energy and resource sector. It's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because on other fronts as it relates to resource extraction, particularly in the oil and gas sector in this province, we've heard from the government of the day that Saskatchewan is a leader and in fact that certain measures that the Government of Alberta has embarked upon were misguided, that ought not to be followed by the people of Saskatchewan. But surprisingly enough, on that side they proclaim the leadership of Saskatchewan.

But when it comes to the regulatory regime, interestingly enough they have us taking our cue from the Government of Alberta. And in fact a number of the measures under this come forward as so-called prime initiatives that relate to the ministry's efforts around oil and gas processes, data system redevelopment, consequent amendments to *The Oil and Gas Conservation Act* and to *The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act*.

And certainly, you know, again if the system can be improved

upon and refined and made to be more responsive to the needs of those stakeholders but to the citizens of the province and to those taxed with providing governance and oversight, fair enough.

But again we see the government of the day proclaiming the leadership of the province of Saskatchewan on the one front in this sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And then on another front, we're following very much behind Alberta, so much so that we're becoming . . . As of the first prime project that was announced in November of last year, it entailed Saskatchewan becoming a full partner in the petroleum registry of Alberta.

And again this may seem a bit pedantic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but this one isn't even coming forward under the aegis of the New West, so-called. This is where we join up their registry. And again, you know, language is important and if this is a joint project between two provinces, you'd expect that to be reflected in the language. But here again, this would seem to be an example of Saskatchewan followership and not leadership in terms of joining up in the petroleum registry of Alberta.

And again, the registry in and of itself is perhaps not necessarily something that we wouldn't want to be part of. It's proclaimed as a joint government and industry strategic alliance enabling Canadian upstream oil and gas producers to carry out complex business and regulatory activities in an efficient and seamless manner. But again, if this is about a New West Partnership, how is it that we're signing on to something that is dictated out of the province of Alberta, as opposed to coming from Saskatchewan, particularly when there's been a fair amount of attention paid to the leadership that this province provides? We find that to be of interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Energy and Resources in his remarks introducing this legislation stated that this will develop more efficient, transparent, and consistent compliance assurance and enforcement processes. They state that it will expand the authority to licence, approve, and permit the drilling and operation of wells and other facilities; that it will streamline the legislative requirements required in the issuance of licences, approvals and permits; and that it will expand the scope of the Saskatchewan orphan well and facility liability management program to match Alberta's. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to match Alberta's, not necessarily that this is designed primarily with Saskatchewan's interests in mind, but again following the province of Alberta.

Again, you know, in terms of the assurance of compliance of the enforcement process, things in and of themselves fairly neutral, it depends what you do with them. But you would expect them to be put forward with the interests of Saskatchewan at heart and with the interests of Saskatchewan first and foremost. And that does not seem to be the case here. This would seem to be a case of followership rather than leadership.

Again, you know, the minister in his introductory remarks around this piece of legislation talked about consolidating legislative requirements related to the issuance and transfer of licences in a logical order, modernizing the wording of offense provisions, increasing the maximum fine to a level where it will have a much greater deterrent effect. Again some of these



things are talked about in the legislation and indeed enabled in the legislation, but of course they rely upon the regulations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the regulations, of course, is often where we find the devil in the details.

[Interjections]

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for joining in the fray here.

Again so Bill No. 157, in terms of harmonizing regimes, enforcement and licensing regimes, regulatory regimes between two provinces, not necessarily a bad thing to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But if this is yet one more example of the slavish devotion of those members opposite to things that are better designed for the people of Alberta than the people of Saskatchewan and, you know, another example of followership on the part of that government in terms of what is in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan instead of leadership, and that being worthy of imitation and profit for the people of Saskatchewan, again we find that to be fairly curious.

It's important to note as well that this is taking place at a time when oil and gas production, oil production in particular and to the drilling levels . . . Since the change of government in 2007, we've seen a decline in the actual drilling on oil and gas since the peak that was achieved under the former Calvert NDP government in 2007. This of course accompanied a general contraction in the economy of 3.9 per cent in this past year alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And again when the economy contracts like that, that means that there are more people unemployed. It means that there are more people having a hard time putting the resources together to put bread on the table, and also as related, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see that in increased food bank utilization, something that was reported on very forcefully today by the Regina and District Food Bank.

So in terms of the way that, you know, an appropriate regulatory regime, an appropriate taxation regime can impact the well-being of an industry, we had seen certainly a peak of production and activity in the sector in 2007 and we've seen that decline since then, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And again that was reflected in this past year alone in the contraction of the economy at 3.9 per cent. It's in such a state, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where it was newsworthy when the *Sask Trends Monitor* stated that Saskatchewan has really had no economic growth since the change of government, and that the improvements in 2008 were largely as a result of inflationary costs. Again, Mr. Speaker, as the prices go up there's an effect on the economy. And that doesn't mean a real gain for the people of the province or the people of Saskatchewan; that means that they're paying more. And that is somehow translated as an improvement in the GDP [gross domestic product].

Again, Mr. Speaker, we find that to be fairly intolerable and a really poor approach to economic development in this province. And again all of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from a government that said, you know, we're ready for growth and all that. Well what we've seen instead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in fact

stagnation and decline and marching positive gains backward.

I'm reminded as well that this came forward under the New West Partnership aegis, but again if that is more about synchronizing everything that we do in Saskatchewan to decisions that are made in Alberta, that's not so much a partnership, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's when the one entity dictates to the other and we just try to catch up. So again, when it should be about leadership, this legislation in many ways would seem to be resonant of the followership.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm reminded by members on my side that there's a great deal of interest in this legislation and that there's a great desire for them to participate in this. So in the interest of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in the interest of facilitating the progress into committee for the committees to do their work there, I would now adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Regina Elphinstone has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 157, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move the House do now adjourn for committees this evening.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has moved a motion to adjourn the House. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.]

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall .....	6403
Yates .....	6404
Huyghebaert .....	6404
Hickie .....	6404
Higgins .....	6405
Norris .....	6405
Broten .....	6405
Draude .....	6405
Krawetz .....	6405
Wotherspoon .....	6406
Weekes .....	6406
Atkinson .....	6406
Michelson .....	6414

#### PRESENTING PETITIONS

Junor .....	6406
Forbes .....	6406
Broten .....	6406
Morin .....	6406
Wotherspoon .....	6407

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

<b>Food Bank Meets Community Needs</b>	
McCall .....	6407
<b>Public Servants Thanked for Help to Flood Victims</b>	
Ottenbreit .....	6407
<b>Homelessness in Saskatoon</b>	
Forbes .....	6408
<b>Melville Football Coach Honoured</b>	
Bjornerud .....	6408
<b>African-Canadian Heritage Museum Honourees</b>	
Taylor .....	6408
<b>Positive Assessment of Saskatchewan's Health Care System</b>	
Kirsch .....	6409
<b>Saskatchewan's Forgotten People</b>	
Chartier .....	6409

#### QUESTION PERIOD

<b>Support for Low-Income People</b>	
Forbes .....	6409
Draude .....	6409
<b>Kidney Donor Paired Exchange Program</b>	
Junor .....	6411
McMorris .....	6411
<b>Funding for Foster Home</b>	
Wotherspoon .....	6411
Krawetz .....	6412
Draude .....	6412
<b>Arrangements for a Long-Term Care Facility</b>	
Atkinson .....	6413
McMorris .....	6413

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

<b>Changes to Saskatchewan Pension Plan</b>	
Krawetz .....	6414
Wotherspoon .....	6415

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

<b>Bill No. 619 — <i>The School Bus Drivers of Saskatchewan Appreciation Day Act</i></b>	
Belanger .....	6416

#### PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

<b>Standing Committee on Human Services</b>	
Ottenbreit .....	6416
<b>Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice</b>	
Michelson .....	6416

**FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS**

**Bill No. 158 — *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010***

**Huyghebaert** .....6417

**THIRD READINGS**

**Bill No. 158 — *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010***

**Huyghebaert** .....6417

**STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

**Ruling on a Point of Order**

**The Speaker** .....6417

**MOTION UNDER RULE 59**

**Assistance for Livestock Producers**

**Lingenfelter** .....6418

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

**Weekes** .....6418

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

**ADJOURNED DEBATES**

**SECOND READINGS**

**Bill No. 161 — *The Election Amendment Act, 2010***

**Trew** .....6418

**Bill No. 162 — *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2010***

**Wotherspoon** .....6423

**Bill No. 159 — *The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2010***

**Nilson** .....6427

**Bill No. 160 — *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010***

**Atkinson** .....6429

**Bill No. 157 — *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2010***

**McCall** .....6432

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