



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, 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: — Why thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, with leave to make an extended introduction.

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, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to all members for leave to make a very, very special introduction, one that we would want to have been made since about 1997.

Joining us in the Speaker's gallery, in your gallery today, is Team Saskatchewan, back now I guess a few days from the Scott in Atlantic Canada. And in between trips because of course, Mr. Speaker, we know they're heading to Denmark to compete in the world champions because they are the national champions. The Scott Tournament of Hearts champions joined us in your gallery.

I'm happy to introduce to you and through you to all members — and maybe they'll just stand as I say their names — of course the skip, Amber Holland; the third, Kim Schneider; the lead, Heather Kalenchuk is here. And the fifth is also here, Jolene Campbell. And we welcome Coach Merv Fonger as well. Tammy was unable to join us. She's sick, but she's going to be just fine and available for the championship.

Mr. Speaker, this team curls out of the Kronau rink very near Regina here. And we all know what happened at the tournament. We remember the victory over Ontario 7-5 in the semifinal. They beat Team Canada 8-7 in the final, stealing the winning point in the 10th. Amber was named the Sandra Schmirler MVP [most valuable player] of the tournament — quite fittingly, Mr. Speaker.

And also it's worth noting the Shot of the Week Award was also presented to Amber. This award of course goes to the curler judged to have made the most outstanding shot during the entire championship, and that shot happened in the sixth end of the final game between Saskatchewan and Team Canada. Saskatchewan was trailing by a score of 6 to 3 with last rock. And with her last rock, Amber squeezed around a front guard and performed a tap-back of course with her rock to take 3 in that particular end and tie the game at 6.

Mr. Speaker, we know it's Saskatchewan's first championship since 1997 when Sandra Schmirler's rink won. And they are going to do a marvellous job of representing our province but

even more importantly replacing green and white with red and white and representing our nation very, very proudly in Denmark from the 18th of March to the 27th of March. We welcome them here. We thank you for this great achievement and for their example, and we wish them all the best at the Worlds. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the Premier here today and welcome team Holland, Team Saskatchewan, now Team Canada, to our Assembly here today. A very special team, Mr. Speaker, that not only serves as inspiration to young people and curlers and communities across Saskatchewan but now across Canada and certainly a point of pride for our province, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to be riveted to the TVs, just as we were through the Scotties, as the Worlds begin next week. We wish this team well, Mr. Speaker, and I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in welcoming team Holland, Team Saskatchewan, now Team Canada. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the House I'd like to introduce Dr. Howard Wheeler, the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Wheeler received his Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] in hydrology from Bristol University and after joining Imperial College served as the director of the school's environment forum. He's the past president of the British Hydrology Society, a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, a fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and a life member of the International Water Academy.

Dr. Wheeler represents the leading edge in water research across the globe. And our government and our people across this province are extremely pleased to bring his tremendous knowledge, experience, and leadership to Saskatchewan. This is especially important regarding his ongoing work that we'll appreciate during World Water Week later this month.

Mr. Speaker, to you and to all members of this legislature, I would ask all the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to welcome Dr. Howard Wheeler, not just to Saskatchewan but to his new Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it is my honour as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to introduce very special guests seated in your gallery.

Just following question period today, I look forward to making a motion to introduce the recommended candidate for the position of Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan from the

Standing Committee on Public Accounts. A full introduction of this candidate will occur later today, but I would like to welcome that candidate, Ms. Bonnie Lysyk, to our Assembly and would invite her to stand and be recognized.

It's also my pleasure to welcome and recognize guests from the Provincial Auditor's office: acting Provincial Auditor Mr. Brian Atkinson; Ms. Angèle Borys, principal; Mr. Mike Heffernan, deputy provincial auditor. And I would also welcome our Provincial Comptroller, Mr. Terry Paton, and also from the comptroller's office, Mr. Chris Bayda.

I recognize some other very special guests here with us here today, and those being our independent officers, Mr. Speaker: Mr. Bob Pringle, Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Barclay, and Mr. Wilkie. The one last guest that I see up there today that played a key role on our screening committee is Ms. Joyce Stubbins that joins us here today.

These special guests have joined us today for the proceedings as we recommend a candidate for the important, invaluable role of Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan. I ask all members of this Assembly to welcome our special guests and to thank them for their work and leadership in our fine province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly like to join with the member opposite, the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, in my capacity as Deputy Chair of that committee in welcoming all those people that he mentioned, in the gallery.

I'd like to certainly welcome, on behalf of all of us in this House, Ms. Lysyk who, as the member had said, a motion will be put forward later today, and all the other independent officers that are here today joining us for this occasion. And I would certainly like to acknowledge the presence of Acting Provincial Auditor Atkinson and along with the member opposite join with him in thanking Ms. Joyce Stubbins for all the great work she did in helping us through the process.

And I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming these guests in our gallery. Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Dr. Wheater to Saskatchewan. Certainly water is a highly important issue for all Saskatchewan people and something that's very near and dear to our hearts. And I know Dr. Wheater's accomplished record as a scholar will serve Saskatchewan people very well. So I'd like to join in welcoming him to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery is seated Neil Buechler, a prominent Saskatonian who's been very active in numerous charitable activities, currently

retired from Marsh Canada, and is sitting on the board of SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. And I would ask that members welcome Mr. Buechler to the Assembly today.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you, through you, and to all members of the Legislative Assembly someone seated in the east gallery by the name of Jen Britton. She is certainly no stranger to the opposition. She is a valuable resource to the opposition in terms of the expertise she provides in representing the SOS, which is the Save Our Saskatchewan Crowns campaign. And from what I understand, Mr. Speaker, she is no longer a stranger to any of the members of the government either. She was able to join them at their convention over the weekend. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to welcome Jen Britton to her legislature, and I hope she enjoys the proceedings that happen today.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome a very special woman in my life, a young woman — she just turned 14 a few days ago — and that is none other than my daughter Morgan Morin who is seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very glad that she is able to join us for the proceedings here today, and I welcome her to the legislature as well.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an individual seated in your gallery.

I'm speaking of course . . . You'd recognized earlier the current member for Last Mountain-Touchwood. This is possibly the next member for Last Mountain-Touchwood. I'm speaking of course of Don Jeworski. Don is an individual that has had a tremendous career in terms of the credit union industry in this province and is doing his part for public service in Cupar, first as a councillor there but currently as mayor of Cupar. And I know he is quite happy to serve the people where he comes from, his roots.

So it's a pleasure to see Don, Your Worship, here today in the Assembly. And I wish him all the luck in the coming election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Don Jeworski to his legislature. The member opposite was certainly correct. Don does a lot of work in the community of Cupar and currently is the mayor. And I must say he is doing an excellent job, and we're going to work very hard to make sure he continues in that position, Mr. Speaker.

But what I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that Saskatchewan

is known as the volunteer province of Canada, and in Cupar I think we're the volunteer community of Saskatchewan. And in fact, you know, the members opposite, the New Democratic Party, was having such a difficult time finding a candidate for their constituency that a member from the Cupar community stepped forward and volunteered to fill that position.

And so I would certainly like to ask all members to join with me in welcoming Don. And I know for a fact that someone from Cupar will hold this seat, and I have no intention of moving, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I know many of my colleagues and the Premier have offered congratulations to the Amber Holland rink, and I would like to join with my colleagues and offer Team Canada congratulations and good luck when you reach Denmark next week.

But I really want to also highlight Merv Fonger being here as the coach of Team Canada. Merv has committed hours — hours and hours — to curling with young people ever since I can remember, and that's been a few years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was so nice not only to see Team Saskatchewan walking down the ice to collect their trophy at the end of a very exciting tournament, but to see Merv there with them. Congratulations to you for a very long career dedicated to young people in curling and making sure that Saskatchewan remains at the top of their game. It is appreciated and it's wonderful to see you there. Thank you.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the House, I'd like to introduce two special guests sitting in the east gallery: my daughter Alison, Alison Forbes, and her friend Alex Folosea.

They actually came home, it's interesting talking about curling, they came home this weekend to take part in a family funspiel. So it's all over. It's in the air. So this is great, even from Toronto they're coming back. But Ali practises law in Toronto at Stikeman Elliott, and Alex is a vet just starting out in Toronto.

We wanted to show them the warm weather here. They were last here in fall for a Roughrider game. Of course the Labour Day Classic, right at the end of the day, people remembered the rainstorm at the end of the day. He experienced that and now he's experiencing the cold weather and fun curling. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join us in welcoming them to their legislature. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like today to present a petition calling for protecting renters from

unreasonable rent increases. And we know that Saskatchewan renters are facing a combination of rising rents and low vacancy rates in many communities. And we know that many renters across this province have seen rent increases of hundreds of dollars each, and some of these rents in even smaller communities like Yorkton and Estevan are more than \$200, even approaching 20 per cent increases. And in Canada, we see 80 per cent of people living with them.

[13:45]

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

And I do so present, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and present a petition on behalf of my constituents regarding the need for a new school in Hampton Village:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that Hampton Village is a rapidly growing community in Saskatoon with many young families; that Hampton Village residents pay a significant amount of taxes including education property taxes; that children in Hampton Village deserve to be able to attend school in their own community instead of travelling to neighbouring communities to attend schools that are typically already reaching capacity.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to devote the necessary resources for the construction of an elementary school in Hampton Village so that children in this rapidly growing neighbourhood in Saskatoon can attend school in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the community of Hampton Village in Saskatoon Massey Place. I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the two consecutive deficit budgets. They reference the debt growth and debt loading and debt trajectory that we see under the Sask Party, and they recognize that this comes at a consequence to Saskatchewan people. 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 today are signed by concerned citizens of Regina. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Kinsmen Telemiracle

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, Telemiracle 35 took place in Saskatoon at TCU Place. Through Telemiracle, the Kinsmen Foundation raises funds to provide special needs equipment and access to medical assistance for Saskatchewan residents, groups, and health foundations.

Mr. Speaker, Telemiracle performs two very important functions for the people of Saskatchewan. First it provides those in need with the resources to improve quality of life and independence. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it gives the people of this province the opportunity to demonstrate their charitable spirit.

This year Telemiracle 35 raised an impressive \$4.6 million. Telemiracle was made possible through the dedicated work of 600 Kinsmen and Kinette volunteers, a production crew of 200, as well as 12 cast members and 50 Saskatchewan artists steeped in talent.

Mr. Speaker, raising \$4.6 million in 20 hours is a remarkable challenge to meet, yet the generosity and goodwill of the people of Saskatchewan met that challenge. As a result, the Kinsmen Foundation is able to do good work throughout the province. Last year they granted over 579 applications ranging from \$125 to \$1.25 million. Mr. Speaker, that's more than one grant for each and every day of the year, and every dollar comes directly from donations to Telemiracle.

The people of this province are to be commended for their benevolence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the member opposite in congratulating the Kinsmen on Telemiracle.

It was back in 1977 that members of the Kinsmen club in Saskatoon took the first step to holding a telethon to raise money for the Kinsmen Foundation. In the years since, Telemiracle has raised nearly \$90 million to help families in this province with individual assistance and donations to organizations.

Assisting an individual with mobility challenges by funding a ramp, for example, Mr. Speaker, does more than make it easier for that person to get around in a wheelchair. It puts that individual on a path to independence. And helping those living with special needs in special care homes by funding equipment like ceiling track systems or lifts or specialty beds does more than respond to the physical needs. It also allows that individual to live in dignity.

This year alone, Mr. Speaker, Telemiracle raised \$4.6 million to help people with special needs and those requiring assistance to access special medical treatment. This outpouring of generosity is a testament not only to the spirit of caring and families in this province but also the commitment of thousands of Telemiracle volunteers who make it all happen year after year.

Just as the efforts of the Kinsmen Foundation open up the possibility for dignity and independence for Saskatchewan people with special needs, Mr. Speaker, so the efforts of Telemiracle crew and their thousands of volunteers make it possible that that outpouring of generosity come from everyone across the province of Saskatchewan.

And so I'd like to ask all members, the members of opposition and government, Mr. Speaker, to join me in congratulating Kinsmen Telemiracle team on moving everyone in Saskatchewan one step down that path of generosity, personal independence, and dignity.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Team Holland Wins 2011 Scotties Tournament of Hearts

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are few things that bring people together across our province as sporting events, whether it's a small-town hockey game, to the Riders, to showing support for the Vancouver Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, February 27th, the Amber Holland rink brought this province together again. People across the province were glued to their television sets as Amber and her Kronau curling team took on the perennial favourites, Jennifer Jones.

The game came down to the final two shots. The final two shots had us all on the edge of our seats. There was very little room for error, but Amber made a perfect draw to the button behind cover. Jones was left to make a double-raised takeout and it didn't happen, making the final score with a steal from the Holland rink, Holland 8, Jones 7.

Team Saskatchewan was able to bring a national championship back to Saskatchewan for the first time since Sandra Schmirler in 1997. This was truly a team effort with each member curling above 80 per cent. Heather Kalenchuk leading the way at 86 per cent, Tammy and Kim Schneider at 85 and 81 per cent respectively, and Holland curled an impressive 83 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I would like to once again congratulate the Holland rink and wish them the very best in the world curling championships in Denmark which will run

from March 18th to 27th. Mr. Speaker, I know they'll do the province proud. I know they'll do the country proud. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly my honour to recognize, celebrate, and wish well Team Holland, also known as Team Canada. It's our privilege to be joined by the team today in our Legislative Assembly. I want to recognize each member of Team Holland: comprised of skip, Ms. Amber Holland; third, Ms. Kim Schneider; second, Ms. Tammy Schneider; lead, Ms. Heather Kalenchuk; and a great coach, Mr. Merv Fonger.

This is a talented and dynamic team, an inspiration to the people in communities of our province where ties to curling run deep. These members are not only elite curlers, they are leaders in our community, not only through their sport but also through their daily work.

Mr. Speaker, a proud province watched and cheered for Team Holland, Team Saskatchewan at the Scotties, hanging on every game. With their victory, we proudly say congratulations. Now they have the exceptional honour of playing for their nation, our country, as Team Canada. This team needs to know that they have a country behind them, and our province couldn't be more proud. I wish them the best in Denmark at the worlds. We are behind them entirely, cheering for them, and will be riveted to the championships just as we were the Scotties.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in welcoming these fantastic ambassadors of our province, these elite curlers, to our Assembly. We wish you the best, wish them the best. Go Saskatchewan. Go Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Prince Albert Pulp Mill to Reopen

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today our government was pleased to announce that the Prince Albert pulp mill is set to reopen. This deal is exciting news for the people and families in Prince Albert and the surrounding area and is a win-win for all Saskatchewan people. The people of Prince Albert have and will continue to work closely with our government to maintain and grow economic activity in the region, starting with the reopening of the P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I along with the members from Carrot River Valley and Saskatchewan Rivers were pleased to be in Prince Albert this morning to celebrate this important event. Rather than the old-style solutions of throwing taxpayers' money at every issue, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to have been able to support a legitimate business proposal that attracts investment to our province rather than drive it away. Our government has been working hard to rebuild the forestry industry.

Mr. Speaker, today we see a bright future for our northern

communities with a strong forestry sector built on sound principles, not desperate political gamesmanship. Mr. Speaker, an operating pulp mill in Prince Albert strengthens all forestry operations in the province. When combined with the biomass power operations, we will see full utilization of our forest resource as part of a real forestry strategy that will serve us for the long term.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is a great day for the people in Prince Albert and the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Report for New Democratic Party Policy Convention

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a few weeks Saskatchewan New Democrats will gather to discuss a report entitled *A Rooted and Growing Vision*, which is the culmination of an ambitious year-long listening process. In town hall meetings, around kitchen tables, and through the Internet, Mr. Speaker, we heard many ideas and dreams on how to build a stronger, fairer, and more sustainable Saskatchewan. These discussions included experts, stakeholders, and many citizens, all of whom shared their vision for this great province in open and respectful dialogue.

That respectful exchange of ideas will continue later this month at our policy convention where delegates will discuss the ideas contained in *A Rooted and Growing Vision* and provide guidance on the policies we will put before the citizens of Saskatchewan in this election year.

That's what democracy is all about, Mr. Speaker, an open exchange of ideas and dreams that allows citizens to have their say before we come to a collective decision together about the direction our province should take in the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that *A Rooted and Growing Vision* is a report that is rooted in the values and principles of Saskatchewan people, and it is a report which contains many ideas that represent an ever-growing vision of the future where the aspirations of all Saskatchewan citizens are more fully achieved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Remembering Mel Watson

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I consider it a great honour today to be able to stand on the floor of the Legislative Assembly and recognize the life, and note the passing of Mr. Mel Watson of Weyburn.

Mr. Watson was a very accomplished businessman in this province, a well-known name in the agricultural industry, perhaps best known for his John Deere dealerships. Like many men of his generation who achieved great success, you would never suspect this just by meeting him. He was humble, modest, and always generous with his time.

His record of serving his community and his province are exemplary: the Weyburn Agricultural Society, board member

and president of Canadian Western Agribition, Canada West Equipment Dealers Association, board member and president of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, board member and chairman of the Weyburn oil show, board member of SaskPower and the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. Mr. Watson served on the Premier's advisory committee, the U of R [University of Regina] tripartite committee, and an advisory committee for the Saskatchewan Roughriders, where he was a 50-year supporter of the club. He also served on the boards of numerous companies.

In recognition of his contributions to the province, Mr. Watson was presented with the Centennial Medal in 2005 and was named as one of Saskatchewan's Men of Influence in 2007 by *Saskatchewan Business Magazine*.

For all of his business success, what gave Mr. Watson his greatest sense of pride and accomplishment was his family. And, Mr. Speaker, I join with the people of Weyburn and indeed the province in offering my deepest sympathies to Mel's wife of 60 years, Doreen, his son Rick, his daughter Shelley, his son Drew, their families, and the entire extended Watson family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Potash Royalties and Taxes

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, last week or a week ago, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan announced that in the year 2010 their profits amounted to \$1.8 billion, and of that, the people of Saskatchewan, families of this province, received 77 million in royalties. And the head of the Potash Corporation indicated that they expected the same kind of returns in 2011, the same formula. That is 95 cents out of every dollar of profit, gross profit, for shareholders in the Potash Corporation and a nickel for the people of Saskatchewan, for families, for projects that we need here in the province.

Can the Premier explain why, at a time when many projects are left undone because of lack of money — in fact, we have no long-term fund for the people of Saskatchewan in saving from our many resources — why has he chosen not to have a review of the potash royalty?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. I'm happy to explain why the Potash Corporation paid that level of royalties on that much income. Because the NDP [New Democratic Party] government, under former Premier Calvert, negotiated a new royalty structure for the province of Saskatchewan that has, when it comes to royalties, remained unchanged by this government.

Just before the election, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government did the right thing. They created a brand new royalty structure for the province that recognized the fact that our potash taxes are the highest in the world and that if we want the potash companies to expand here versus the three pages of projects that exist around the world, if we want those jobs here, 19,000 of

them — hundreds of permanent jobs — and to keep the province moving forward, we're going to have to provide a temporary incentive.

Mr. Speaker, that's what the NDP plan does. We support that plan. And what the member is not telling the province is that the Potash Corp and other companies pay hundreds of millions of dollars in income tax. It's as if he's unfamiliar with how companies report their finances, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Potash Corp, Bill Doyle, clearly indicated that the profits and the price of potash is a new norm in the world, very different than it was when the original deal was signed.

The question to the Premier is this: at a time when we have record profits, windfall profits, that nobody was foreseeing 10 years ago . . . In fact the profits are up by 600 per cent for the Potash Corporation over the last 10 years, and the people of Saskatchewan get exactly the same amount as they did 10 years ago. Can the Premier explain why he is not choosing now to do a review where the people of this province would get their fair share of royalty from the potash that the people of this province own?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The reason, Mr. Speaker, is that, unlike the NDP, we are not going to pursue reckless policies that risk thousands of jobs in the expanding potash mines, Mr. Speaker. The potash producers of the province have sent a letter . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there's a letter that's been sent from the potash producers of this province to the Leader of the Opposition when he announced the fact that he is going to pursue a brand new NDP job-killing potash tax. The potash producers of the province said what is at risk are thousands of jobs currently under way in terms of expansion of the mines, expansions that are happening because of the NDP royalty structure which remains in place. And what may also be at risk are hundreds of permanent jobs at those mines.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member chirped from his seat, what consulting have you done? Well as a matter of fact, it was their policy, their royalty policy we're talking about. That's point number one.

Point number two, the potash producers have asked that member for a meeting to talk about his plan. They asked for . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, they've asked that member for

a meeting to talk about his plan and the potentiality that it will risk thousands of jobs in the province. They asked for it in January. He has yet to return their call or answer their letter. He has yet to have a meeting, Mr. Speaker. Why won't he explain more about the NDP job-killing potash tax?

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, if the Premier is not interested in my opinion on royalty . . . And I question why he wouldn't listen to some other people from across Canada. And I want to quote several of them who have a different opinion than his when it comes to royalty. Sylvain Charlebois, the assistant dean of the Guelph university and former University of Regina business professor says, and I quote, "The world needs the mineral. The world needs potash. I think there is actually a public responsibility for the government to go for a review."

Jack Mintz from the University of Calgary said of the current royalty, "It is just wrong." And other experts say even stronger words. In fact, Mintz goes on to say, and I quote, "My argument is that actually a poor rent controller and collector, and probably not collecting enough rents on it, referring to potash."

My question to the Premier is: how is that we can have a cap on royalty paid by the Potash Corp but can't have a cap for renters in the province of Saskatchewan? How does that work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, here's the answer to the question. The reason we don't have a cap on rent in the province is because they took it off of rent in 1991 when he sat in the cabinet of the province of Saskatchewan. The reason why we have the current cap on the current royalty structure is because the Calvert NDP government introduced it, Mr. Speaker. That's the answer to his question.

We have taken the advice of others when it comes to promoting royalty stability to promote the province moving forward with these expansions in the potash mines. We took the advice of the former premier, Mr. Calvert.

And we took another individual's advice who, on February 28, 2011, said this: "Policy reversals and policy changes, surprises that adversely affect return on investment, dramatically discourage investment in our province." That's from the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has said, "Let's keep the momentum we've got going forward. Thousands of jobs are being created. We're leading the country in economic growth."

The number one threat to that, Mr. Speaker, is not the current royalty structure. The number one threat to our ongoing prosperity is that member and his 1970s ideas, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the Premier this: that it's an unusual position for the Premier or the governor or for the prime minister of any country to say look, the people should be welcoming and accepting just jobs; they don't need any royalty. Where else in the world could you take your company

and pay 5 cents on a dollar in royalty? Nowhere other than here under this Premier.

My question to the Premier is this: in light of the fact that he's not willing to take the advice of Charlebois or Jack Mintz, will he take the advice of farmers who want a payment of \$100 for flooded acres or the people in Wawota who want their nursing home kept open or the university students who can't get daycare? Would he take their advice that maybe we could squeeze a little more than a nickel on a dollar out of the potash corporation and do some of the things that people in this province want?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's as if the hon. member does not know what's happening in terms of the worldwide potash industry. Today the taxes in Saskatchewan for potash, the royalty and production taxes, are the highest of any place in the world. Mr. Speaker, our tax rates are . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the members to allow the Premier to be heard in his response.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the current structure of taxes, the ones that the NDP . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. The Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tax structure we have in the province brought in by the NDP makes this the fact, that Saskatchewan has the highest production and royalty potash taxes in the world. And so when you're competing with three pages of other potential expansion projects in Jordan and Israel and Chile, you have to provide some temporary incentives to see that those expansions and those . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Regina Walsh Acres wants to enter into debate. I would ask the member to allow the Premier to respond. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, to ensure that those expansion jobs are happening in our communities and in our province, you need to provide some temporary incentives. That's what we have in the province to ensure that we're competing with the world, to ensure that we're attracting investment from around the world, that we're creating thousands of jobs. Mr. Speaker, the only outfit that doesn't like that are the provincial NDP.

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

Rent Controls

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that Saskatchewan has become much more expensive over the past three years and this has caused some real problems around

keeping rents affordable, especially for students, young families, and seniors here in Saskatchewan.

To the minister: will the minister do the right thing today, this session, and tell the people of Saskatchewan that he will enact rent controls?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite, no, our government is not considering rent controls. We know very well that evidence from other jurisdictions have shown when there is rent control, there is a decline in availability and in the quality of housing there is available.

Mr. Speaker, our government's stance on rent control was echoed by a lot of people in the last week when the members opposite put out their stand on rent control. People like the mayor of Saskatoon who said rent controls have proven they never work. People like Jason Hall of the Regina landlord association who said losing the ability to adjust rent would lead to fewer rental units.

Mr. Speaker, the vacancy rate has improved from 1.9 per cent to 2.5 per cent. In 2007, the year of the election, at the time of the election, the vacancy rate was 1.2 per cent. Today it is 2.5 per cent. But you know what the members opposite chose to do? They chose to take \$100 million to buy a pulp mill in Prince Albert instead of putting it into affordability. That's where their issues were, Mr. Speaker. I think that members opposite should question their party's priorities.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that is quite an interesting answer with all sorts of half facts here and there and all over the place. But we know the vast majority of Canadians are living with rent controls today, and it's working. For example, when we compare Saskatoon and Regina in terms of the total number of combined rental units started in Regina and Saskatoon between 2007 and 2009, Winnipeg beat them every year, where there was rent control.

Why do we have to wait and see if this pre-election spending of the government's announced past few weeks . . . Do we have to wait and see if it suffers the same fate as Head Start? We need action today. Will the minister say she will enact rent controls?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, again to the member opposite, the answer is no. In fact if the members opposite want to look at Manitoba, last year in Saskatchewan we went from 1.9 per cent to 2.5. And you know what Winnipeg did? They went from 1.1 per cent to 0.8 per cent. Their vacancy rate has actually declined.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should be listening to people who really understand what's going on, people like Bruce Johnstone from the *Leader-Post* who said rent controls

are not the best way of increasing the stock of low-cost housing. In fact it can be argued that rent controls have exactly the opposite effect. And Nobel laureate, economist James Buchanan on rent controls said it's one of the things where people simply don't understand simple economics, and therefore they put in for political reasons what will damage the very people it was designed to help. Mr. Speaker, that's not our goal, is to damage the people that we are helping.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And that's cold comfort to the renters across this province. And we've heard from many, many people, hard-working people right across this province, who've told us something has to be done. Something has to be done about rents in this province. The marketplace has failed, and they're being gouged. And we know right across Canada, many provinces, 80 per cent of Canadians are living with rent controls. They're seeing positive, real solutions to issues that face them every day when it comes to paying rent.

To the minister: when will she listen to the people, to the people who are struggling to get by because of high rents? Will she recognize today the marketplace has failed too many people, and we need rent controls today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what we have to do is create a larger supply of rental units, not control the ones that we do have. And that's what we're trying to do as government, is make sure we increase the number of units. Mr. Speaker, since 2007 we have built 860 units of affordable housing in Saskatchewan, and there's 1,100 more units under construction at this time. And at the same time . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, there was an opportunity earlier this year at the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention to talk to the mayors and ask them if they would be involved in a housing summit and a provincial housing strategy. On April 19th and 20th we will have a summit where we'll be involving not just government. We'll be involving SUMA and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and municipalities and financial institutions and developers to . . . [inaudible] . . . have their voice when it comes to building more units in this province.

That's what we need to do. We have to make sure that there are more units, not control the ones that we have in the province.

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

Investments in Health Care

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people

can't afford the Sask Party's privatization agenda. The Sask Party is privatizing the health care system and Saskatchewan people are worried. They don't want to sell out Saskatchewan health care.

Mr. Speaker, the minister cut funding for the public surgical centre in Regina and used it to buy more expensive surgeries from a private clinic. Why is the minister so intent on abandoning the public system and promoting private, for-profit health care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when we came to government in 2007, we conducted a Patient First Review that identified very clearly that the wait times, the access to health care, was far too long. Under 16 years of NDP government, Mr. Speaker, we ended up inheriting the longest wait-lists in Canada for surgery, Mr. Speaker — absolutely unacceptable.

We put together a surgical care initiative that looked at all the delivery of surgery, Mr. Speaker. One of the options was to look at a third party deliverer, Mr. Speaker. That's what we've done in Regina and Saskatoon, but that's not all that we did, Mr. Speaker. Just two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, this government put \$40 million into dealing with the surgical wait times inherited by that government.

[14:15]

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

Ms. Junor: — It seems an odd way, Mr. Speaker, to promote public health care — by putting money in the private system. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan families want a strong, publicly funded health care system. They feel it's the best way to move forward, and poll after poll says so.

Mr. Speaker, when the minister decided to buy surgeries from the private sector rather than improve the public system, an arbitrator ruled that it is more cost-effective to perform these surgeries in the public system.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister heed the evidence and invest taxpayers' money in the public system to benefit the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, in the last three and a half years, this Sask Party government has put more into the health care system than any single year of the NDP government, Mr. Speaker. We're putting more into the health care system. And they say, we want to put more into the public system. Well how about putting 850 more nurses into the public system, Mr. Speaker, something that they never did? They would never set a target because they would never accomplish it, Mr. Speaker, unlike the government of the day, Mr. Speaker.

Not only did we set a target for nurses. We've set a target that people should wait no longer than three months by the year 2014, Mr. Speaker. We're well on the way of matching that. In

the first three and a half years, we've cut the number of people waiting 18 months or longer by 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker; people waiting longer than 12 months by 27 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That's real progress. That's real progress for Saskatchewan citizens.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All the money in the world can't hide the privatization agenda. Mr. Speaker, the money to the health regions was cut in the last budget. Long-term care beds are being closed across the province. Emergency room services in rural Saskatchewan are being closed. Communities are in bidding wars for doctors while doctors' vacancies have gone up from 84 to 119. The kidney transplant program is non-existent. Chiropractic care services have been de-insured. And the money allotted for the public surgical care centre in Regina has been used to buy more expensive surgeries from a private clinic.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: when is he going to stop letting Saskatchewan Party's privatization schemes get in the way of providing Saskatchewan families with quality, cost-efficient health care for their tax dollars?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we're seeing the wait-list drop, something that this province hasn't seen for many, many years under the NDP government, Mr. Speaker. We're making progress.

In fact I think you could talk to about 6 to 700 patients that received service in Saskatoon at Omni surgical clinics — third party under the public system, no queue-jumping, no paying out of pocket — and ask them if they would rather go back on the wait-list, which is exactly what would happen under the NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're making real progress. And she says all the money in the world won't hide the fact that third party delivery's in the system. We're not trying to hide it, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we're very proud of it.

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

Support for Education

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, delivering excellence in education is crucial to our province's future, yet this government is undermining the quality of our children's education. One example of that is the forced reduction in the number of educational assistants which provide much-needed one-on-one support that is crucial to the success of many children.

To the minister: what other short-sighted decisions are in store in the upcoming budget that will undermine our education system?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's truly interesting that that member would ask that question when we have, year over year, increased the amount of money allocated to the school divisions around our province. We have increased the budgets by 14.7 per cent in the last three years. That has far exceeded inflation increases during that time and it's exceeded increases in enrolment.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we have invested an unprecedented \$400 million to ensure that our students have safe, very, very well-equipped schools in which they are going to. Mr. Speaker, that is to pick up the neglect that was under the NDP. Nobody wants to go back to where schools are deteriorating and roofs are leaking, which is what was happening when the NDP were in government.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we already know that the upcoming budget will fail Saskatchewan children. The minister revealed a few weeks ago that the sustainable education funding formula promised several years ago will not be delivered in this year's budget. In response, the president of Saskatchewan School Boards Association asked, "How long can boards continue to operate in limbo?" Mr. Speaker, school boards need that formula in order to properly plan their budgets including hiring, if necessary, teachers and EAs [educational assistant] to deliver high-quality education.

To the minister: why is the government undermining our children's education and leaving school boards in limbo for yet another year?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat that school boards are not in limbo. They have received increases year over year under this government, and they have the discretion and the authority to decide their staffing complement that they so choose. There are adjustments done within the school boards as their decisions. There's adjustments for school enrolment increases. That is being addressed, Mr. Speaker, in the allocation of funding. I have a lot of confidence in the decisions made by our school boards, Mr. Speaker, and they decide who the staffing complement or what the staffing complement would be.

So again we have increased funding to the school divisions, which has been greater than inflation during those years. It's been greater than the increase in enrolment. The school divisions make decisions on staffing by request, by parents, quite frankly, by the special needs within the student body that they have, and it is decisions that's made at the local level.

Mr. Speaker, there is not uncertainty. There's increases year over year.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister can brush off the

concerns that have been voiced about uncertainty. That's not consistent with what school boards are saying around the province. The Chair of the Saskatoon Public School Board has said the funding around the, the uncertainty around the funding over the past few years has made it difficult to plan for the future. The Chair said:

University graduates are looking for jobs and we're trying to make contract offers to the best and brightest. This kind of uncertainty is going to make us have some sober second thoughts about what we can commit to.

Mr. Speaker, when school boards can't plan and hire needed teachers and educational assistants, it's the quality of our children's education that suffers. To the minister: why should children have to pay the price for the government's decision to delay the funding formula?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, again I will repeat: year over year, we have increased the amount of money that has gone to school divisions. Those increases have exceeded inflation increases during that same period. In particular, the Saskatoon School Division that the member opposite referenced has received increases because they've had increases in enrolment. So every year they have received increases, so they do know the amount of money they will have. There will be factors that we brought in for increase in students. There will be consideration to the amount of immigrants of students that will be brought in to that school division.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not a decrease in funding as the member opposite would like to mislead the public into believing. That is not the case. This is the increase, year over year.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this line of questioning is about the government's refusal to provide a funding formula to allow school boards to plan over the long term. The issue here is about the ability to plan and have a predictable, sustainable funding formula.

The government stripped school boards of the ability to set their own mill rates and promised a new funding formula. But it has failed to deliver, leaving school boards in limbo and students suffering the consequences of few resources, teachers, and educational assistants.

To the minister: what is the real reason she has chosen to delay the funding formula until after the election? Is she putting our children's quality of education at risk simply to help her party during the election?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, by the member opposite keep saying that we're putting our students' education at risk, what he's doing is he is questioning the ability of a school division or school boards to make very wise decisions. They have money. They have more money than

they've had before, and they make the staffing decision. We have confidence that those school boards are making the wisest decisions for the student complement they have.

So for the member opposite to say that they cannot decide what to do when they have more money than they had before is questioning the ability of those members who are duly elected at the local level to make wise decisions. Mr. Speaker, it's insulting to the school board members to suggest that they don't know how to staff with more money than they've had before.

Mr. Speaker, we've supported the school boards. We've supported them through operating and we have made unprecedented investments in capital, which that party never did when they were in government.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Prince Albert Pulp Mill to Reopen

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and advise the House that the Prince Albert pulp mill will be restarting. Paper Excellence has purchased the Prince Albert pulp mill from Domtar. Paper Excellence will invest more than \$200 million to reopen this facility when it comes, along with it 200 direct jobs to our province.

I would like to quote Dave Coles, the president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, from this morning, where he states this deal is “proof that if workers, governments and business work together on renewing Canada's forest industry, great things can happen.”

Paper Excellence, who have an excellent track record in Saskatchewan as operators of the Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp mill . . . The government has worked with parties involved in offering the following provisions: the provision of an adequate wood fibre supply; an agreement that will see SaskPower purchasing surplus electricity from a biomass power facility to be incorporated into the mill. That agreement calls for the purchase of biomass power at prices consistent with rates charged for this type of project from across Canada.

In addition to maintaining the existing environmental liability for a period of time when the mill operated as a Crown corporation prior to 1986, the government will also ensure that new pension plan agreements will be in place that respect the obligation of the previous employers.

Finally, \$500,000 per year will be allocated for the first two years to train new mill operators. Workers will be needed to be trained in the new processes before the start-up of the new mill. The announcement is great news for the city of Prince Albert.

I would like to congratulate all the groups involved who have worked very hard for the success of this announcement including the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union; the city of Prince Albert; our First Nations partners from the Agency Chiefs Tribal Council and the Montreal Lake Cree Nation and industry partners. Without their involvement, this

project could not have been brought together.

Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a great day and a good news story for the people of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'd ask . . . Order. Order. Order. I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise on behalf of the official opposition to respond to the ministerial statement on the sale of the Prince Albert pulp mill today. And I want to thank the Minister of Energy and Resources for providing me with a copy of his remarks prior to reading them in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, indeed the citizens of Prince Albert have been waiting for some time to know, understand, and be able to work with the future planning for the pulp mill there in the city of Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of challenges in the city of Prince Albert over the last three years, Mr. Speaker, challenges because of reduced revenues available to the city. Challenges, Mr. Speaker, that even resulted earlier this year in the mayor and council stating that they could not participate in the development of long-term care beds in the city of Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, because they didn't have the capacity to raise the municipal share necessary to complete the project, Mr. Speaker.

So these have been challenging times in Prince Albert. And I'm certain that the people in Prince Albert are pleased today to know that there's some future in the building there at the Prince Albert mill.

Mr. Speaker, there are still some questions in Prince Albert today. One of them I think is for the member of Prince Albert Carlton who, everyone knows, in 2007 said through the media, “A vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill open,” Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to refer to other members by their location unless they're quoting from something.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I simply refer members opposite to the ads that the member wrote. I quoted directly from the ads the member put in.

But my point is, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the people who read those ads thought that it would take three years with no plan from this government and, Mr. Speaker, ultimately a loss in jobs. I don't think that that's what they thought the member from P.A. Carlton was saying when he put those ads in the paper.

But that having been said, Mr. Speaker, there's also this concern that the forest industry generally requires a plan, Mr.

Speaker, an understanding of where the industry is going, and the assistance that the province is there to provide, Mr. Speaker.

The government opposite, the members opposite prior to forming government in '07, sent out the member from Batoche to do a broad plan about the forestry sector, Mr. Speaker. There's still no release of that document, Mr. Speaker, and there's still absolutely no evidence, Mr. Speaker, that his work led to the development of a government plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, one further thing: when the Domtar mill was a question in this Chamber in 2008, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy at the time said, we have something in the works, just wait and see. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a good thing the people of Prince Albert and the people of this Chamber didn't hold their breath waiting to see what would happen.

But, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the mill will reopen does indicate that there is confidence by industry and workers in the sector, Mr. Speaker. There is going to be some provincial contribution required here, whether it's on the side of the pensions or whether it's on the side of the environmental liability, Mr. Speaker. There is a provincial contribution that's going to be required here. And, Mr. Speaker, we will ensure, as the people of Prince Albert will ensure, that in fact the province of Saskatchewan not only lives up to this deal but is accountable and transparent, Mr. Speaker, unlike their recent experience with the Saskatchewan-Montana carbon capture project, Mr. Speaker.

So I thank the minister for providing me with his remarks in advance, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the people of Prince Albert well as they proceed on their new path in forestry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to present its second report. I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts 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 Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave to move a motion before orders of the day regarding the appointment of the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — The Chair of the Public Accounts Committee has requested leave to make some comments before moving a motion in regards to the appointment of the new Provincial Auditor. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

MOTIONS

Appointment of Provincial Auditor

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts has been active for the better part of a year with respect to the process of selecting a Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan. I would like to thank all members, and specifically our Vice-Chair of that committee, for the work in that important process.

As such we have shared with this legislature the process that was followed to determine our recommendation to this Assembly for Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan. The standing committee has adopted and has presented a report titled the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to this Assembly. Please refer to that report for the detail of the specific activities, processes, and individuals that were engaged through the selection process. This report includes the dates of activities and meetings.

I would like to provide sincere thanks and appreciation to all individuals that assisted our committee in carrying out its responsibility. Pursuant to 21(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act*, your committee sought the assistance of two recognized, independent subject matter experts from the audit committee to assist in the Provincial Auditor selection process on an independent screening panel.

Your committee wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to its appointed subject area experts: Dr. Nola Buhr, Chair of the audit committee, and Ms. Joyce Stubbins, member of the audit committee. I would also like to thank Ms. Kathy Burianyk, committee Clerk and Ms. Ginette Michaluk, assistant director of human services and payroll services for administrative and human resource assistance with that screening panel.

Following the retirement of former auditor Mr. Fred Wendel, our committee began its process of determining the next Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan.

For his leadership through the better part of the past year, I would like to recognize our Acting Provincial Auditor, Mr. Brian Atkinson, and to thank him for his service to our fine province. Mr. Atkinson has devoted 35 years to the people of Saskatchewan through his work in the Provincial Auditor's office, holding progressively senior positions. He has served as deputy or assistant provincial auditor from 1980 through 2010. Mr. Atkinson has served as Acting Provincial Auditor since

May 2010 and has been an active member as a chartered accountant of his institute. Not only do I want to thank Mr. Atkinson for his service and leadership; I want to wish Mr. Atkinson well into his next stage of life. It's well-deserved.

The independent Office of the Provincial Auditor is vital to Saskatchewan people, as it is critical to ensure good government, with its role of accountability and its focus on the efficiency and economy of government programs. The specific role of Provincial Auditor is one of great importance, and the individual that fulfills that role provides valued leadership and service to our province. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, it's my honour to welcome and to introduce the recommended candidate for Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, Ms. Bonnie Lysyk.

As background, born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Ms. Lysyk is a graduate of the University of Manitoba. She has a master's in business administration and is a chartered accountant and a certified internal auditor. Ms. Lysyk presents to us a candidate with diverse experience in senior leadership in the public, private, and Crown sectors. Ms. Lysyk has significant audit, finance, risk management, and governance experience gained from working over 25 years in these sectors. She has served as the deputy auditor general and chief operating officer for the Office of the Auditor General of Manitoba for nearly seven years.

She has held senior management positions in private sector organizations, including OMERS, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System, a large pension fund organization where she held the position of vice-president, internal audit. As well, Ms. Lysyk worked for over 10 years with Manitoba Hydro in various roles, including assistant to the president and chief executive officer of Manitoba Hydro. She has also served as the chief audit executive with the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission. She obtained her CA [chartered accountant] while working with Coopers & Lybrand, now PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Over the years Ms. Lysyk has been involved with various professional and not-for-profit organizations including the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Manitoba, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation, the YM/YWCA [Young Men's/Young Women's Christian Association], and the centre for protection of children in Manitoba.

Further she has served on the board of a large Manitoba credit union for nine years and as board chair for two years and is presently on the board of the Canadian Council of Institute of Internal Auditors.

It is my honour to welcome Ms. Lysyk as a recommended candidate for Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan. And if this Assembly grants their support, I thank her in advance for the leadership and service that she will provide the people of Saskatchewan.

It was a result of a thorough process and careful deliberation that your Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed on this candidate for recommendation. After carefully reviewing the qualifications of each candidate and the results of the

interviews, your committee makes the following recommendation.

I move, as seconded by the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on the Public Accounts, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood:

That pursuant to 3.1(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act* your committee unanimously recommends to the Legislative Assembly the name of Ms. Bonnie Lysyk for appointment to the position of Provincial Auditor for the province of Saskatchewan.

I so move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee:

That pursuant to section 3.1(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act* this Assembly appoints Bonnie Lysyk to the position of Provincial Auditor for Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Deputy Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly a pleasure to speak to the motion, and I would certainly concur with the comments made by the member from Rosemont, the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

I would join with him in thanking all members of the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker. The Chair and myself were part of the steering committee, and we worked along with the committee Clerk, Ms. Kathy Burianyak, to play a role in developing the process, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a process that served the members of this House and the people of this province well.

As the Chair mentioned, we elicited the help of two very qualified individuals from the audit committee, Dr. Nola Buhr and Ms. Joyce Stubbins, who were invaluable in guiding us through this process. And I would certainly like to join with the member opposite in thanking them for all their help, and of course Ms. Ginette Michaluk from legislative services here who was a valuable resource in the area of human services.

This is my first time in serving on a committee that undertook a national search for a position of one of the independent officers of this legislature. And without the expertise of those individuals on the selection panel, Mr. Speaker, I think those of us that haven't had experience would have certainly been lost, and we certainly acknowledge their help and their guidance, Mr. Speaker.

The appointment of . . . The Provincial Auditor's office is certainly a very high profile independent office that many people throughout this province recognize, not saying that the other offices aren't. They certainly all provide invaluable service to the legislature and to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

As the member from Rosemont mentioned and listed the qualifications of Ms. Lysyk for the position, I think if

individuals go to the appendix A in the report that was tabled, they will see the wide range of experience including a number of years as deputy auditor general of Manitoba. In Manitoba they refer to their provincial auditor as the Auditor General. I'm not sure; I think Saskatchewan may be the only province that doesn't use that term and so on. But, Mr. Speaker, I would look forward to working with Ms. Lysyk if this House approves her appointment. As I said, she certainly has the qualifications.

But I would be remiss, before taking my place, if I didn't thank the current Acting Provincial Auditor, Mr. Brian Atkinson, for his work and his many years of service. And I know he is looking forward to doing some other things. But we certainly, on behalf of the people of this province, I would also like to extend my thank you to him for all the great years of service and good service that he has provided to the people of this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion I would just like to say that, and remind members of this House, that *The Provincial Auditor Act*, the Public Accounts Committee is required under the Act to make a unanimous recommendation to the House. And we have achieved that, Mr. Speaker. And therefore I would conclude by saying that we have a process in place that, I believe, it will serve the members of this legislature and the people of this province very well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:45]

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion presented by the member from Regina Rosemont:

That pursuant to section 3.1(1) of *The Provincial Auditor Act*, this Assembly appoints Bonnie Lysyk to the position of Provincial Auditor of the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Before we move on to orders of the day, I would like to extend an invitation to the members, our guests who are with us in the Chamber today, to a tea hosted by the Speaker in the library. And that would allow members the opportunity of getting to meet our new Provincial Auditor as well as conversing with other independent officers of the Assembly.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney on a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today, in response to a question, the Minister of Education clearly stated that the members of the opposition were misleading the public.

Beauchesne's, page 146, very clearly indicates that that language has been ruled unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, and I wish you to rule on the language used by the minister.

The Speaker: — Order. I've heard the member's point of order. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to withdraw the statement and apologize.

The Speaker: — I thank the Minister of Education.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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 Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to rise to speak on a Bill that was introduced in the fall, obviously, earlier in this session, which is called *An Act to amend The Election Act, 1996*.

Now we know that over the last number of elections, the number of people who have participated in the elections has been steadily dropping, and it's quite ironic that this government chooses to introduce legislation which will restrict the ability of people to vote rather than legislation which will make it easier for people to vote and to participate in the democratic process.

And there are a number of concerns that I have about this legislation, but let me put it this way, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan we have a special quality of neighbourliness and understanding and I think it's summed up by the comments of Brent Butt in a number of his comedy shows.

And I ask that maybe the Minister of Justice might want to listen to this particular quote because there's a story that Brent Butt tells about a new RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer who is assigned to a small town in Saskatchewan. And it so happens that this RCMP officer has just finished his training here at the training academy in Regina but in fact he comes from Toronto, big city. And so he is a very able student in the academy and he shows up in the small town, and wouldn't you know it? First day on the job there's a robbery that takes place at the local credit union.

And so this new RCMP recruit goes to talk to the witnesses, who happen to be the manager and the teller at the credit union, and starts saying to them, can you give me a description of the person who has robbed your bank? And they both said, it was

Brad. And the RCMP officer says, no give me a description — height, weight, and colour. And they both say, no, it was Brad.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that kind of perspective in Saskatchewan, which is that we know our neighbour, we know the people that are here, means that this kind of legislation that's being introduced here has some other purpose. And one of the frustrations when you look at and try to understand what the minister is doing in this particular legislation is that it seems to go contrary to the understandings in many of our communities within the cities, within the smaller towns, within rural areas, that we kind of know the people who live in our area. Now one of the concerns that arises is that the actual officials in the polling booths are no longer given the opportunity of acknowledging who people are unless they have come forward with some ID [identification] as set out in this legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, why is this legislation being introduced? That's I think a good question. Now for me there are some parallels with this legislation that relate to a number of different things. One of the things we know that this government does is that it does things in code. It does things which appeal to certain sectors of their supporters.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not totally certain, but I have a strong suspicion that this particular legislation is code to many of their supporters that we will make sure that the participation rate in democracy, in the elections in Saskatchewan, for those people who are on the lower end of the financial scale, for those people who come from Métis communities, for those people who come from Aboriginal communities, we'll make sure that those groups continue to have low participation rate in democracy because they've kind of been left out of the financial system and we don't want their ability to vote to somehow mess up things such as we've got them right now.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it's code to their supporters saying, well we're going to do some things here that make it difficult. Now why do I say that this has got that kind of a perspective? Well, Mr. Speaker, this legislation comes from similar kinds of attempts south of the Canadian border in the United States that also relate to a different issue there, which is the issue of the great number of Hispanic voters, which also is, in a way, a way of restricting the people who can participate in our democracy.

I do not think that this is the appropriate kind of legislation that should be introduced into our province on that ground alone. I know that it's been 50 years now since the voters' rights battles in the United States over restricting the ability of Black voters to register so that they could vote in the southern United States. And there were many, many battles that arose out of that situation which caused all kinds of difficulties, but if you go and look back at well what was the legislation that triggered those battles, it was similar to this legislation here about the way that you restrict poor people, disadvantaged people from exercising their ability to vote. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we should be extremely careful as we move forward with this legislation because it has that aspect of restricting the ability of people to participate in democracy rather than encouraging them.

This is an amendment to *The Election Act*. We don't do this very often. I think it's 15 years since the Act was passed, and

I'm not sure when the last amendment was, but it's been a little while.

Why don't we see in this proposal a proposal for assisting voting online or assisting voting for those people who are not as mobile as they once were? Many of our seniors have difficulty getting to the polls and there are some things that we could do which would make it much easier for them to vote. You know, where is that kind of a perspective which says hey, we don't have enough people voting in our province? Let's get more people voting. Instead we have this legislation which appears to be a restriction on the ability of people to vote.

Now when you look at the legislation itself, it appears fairly innocuous but in actual fact it includes a whole number of places where a person's ability to vote can be challenged. And some of the provisions are clearly meant to prevent large numbers of First Nations people from voting. Now we've already had difficulties over the years with First Nations people voting in that we haven't very often set up appropriate polls right on First Nations or we haven't provided assistance for voters in some of the areas where maybe people need more assistance in voting. So here we add another reason for people to stay away from participating in our democracy.

Now when this legislation came forward the minister said, and I quote from his speech on December 1st, he says, "Voters are already required to show approved ID in order to vote in federal elections and provincial elections in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec."

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that as a result of this legislation in some of these other provinces and the federal legislation, there have been a number of challenges to how the legislation is enforced. And a number of the challenges relate to some fairly practical issues.

Now one of the things is that our constitution doesn't have these conditions in it as to who can vote, so these are glosses. These are things that are added on that are not in the constitution. And there is no requirement in our constitution that a voter has to have documentary evidence of their identity and their residential address before they can vote. Basically, Canadian citizens can vote. And there also end up being a whole number of groups that will be specifically excluded as we look at this.

Now in the legislation there's discussion about the various documents that one might use to prove whether or not you're able to vote. It's curious though that one of the documents that's not included is the Certificate of Indian Status or the status card. And the status card doesn't have an address on it normally, and so therefore it doesn't qualify as a particular one. Also your passport wouldn't be good enough as identification either because it doesn't have an address on that one. So you'd end up with a number of different challenges on those fairly basic, important ID situations.

So the one kind of card that seems to be the ideal card that's being referenced in this particular legislation is a driver's licence. Now there are more and more citizens who, as they age, no longer drive. And practically we have some ways for people getting ID, and I think practically that would address some of these concerns. But once again it's an area where there are

issues around how and what kinds of documents would be available.

[15:00]

Now another issue as it relates to drivers' licences is that there are many disabled who can't operate a vehicle and so they're not allowed to, you know, to get a driver's licence, obviously, so they would need some other kind of licence.

I think that if governments are wishing to go forward with these kinds of proposals, it's incumbent upon the government to spend some time — maybe years in advance — to make sure that everyone has appropriate identification. And one way of assuring that people would have appropriate identification is that the government would issue for free, to every citizen, photo ID that would be of sufficient quality to make sure everybody would have a chance to vote.

And there may be reasons to do that other than these particular election Act changes, but it does go to the heart of many of the issues for homeless people. Some of the challenges to the federal legislation and the British Columbia legislation relates to homeless people in the downtown east side of Vancouver. And a number of the points that were raised in that situation were the fact that people who live on the streets don't actually have an address. But what they were able to do in previous elections was to have people who lived in that neighbourhood and who knew them, and had known them for quite a few years, vouch for them.

I'm not sure that that particular kind of situation may not apply in some of our communities in Saskatchewan where there are people who are couch surfing or who are not able to afford a place to live. And we know on our side of the House that there are many people who are having significant difficulties in finding places to live in the communities where they have work or they have services that they require. And this Act doesn't appear to deal with those kinds of people in a way that's sufficient as well.

Now one of the other concerns that arises in this particular legislation is that they've set up a system whereby somebody can vouch for another voter, but the system is designed so that one person who, like a community social worker or a teacher or a pastor in a church or some leader in the community, is only allowed to vouch for one person. They can't vouch for a whole number of people that they would know in the community. How fair is that, Mr. Speaker?

It doesn't make sense that you would only be able to vouch for one person. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that type of a clause in this legislation does relate to this perspective of, let's try to keep as many of these people on the edges of society away from the ballot box; we don't want them voting against our government. And, Mr. Speaker, that seems to be an underlying theme of this very brief piece of legislation, is that somehow we're going to restrict people who maybe disagree with some of the policies that we have.

And so I think that there will be a number of substantial issues that relates to this particular piece of legislation that fit in with some of the broader issues that come across the country and

other provinces where restrictions on voting have been set up. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a sad day here in Saskatchewan that we have taken a perspective of trying to restrict access to democracy as the theme of the government rather than a broader theme of saying, we want everybody to participate in the discussion.

Now is this a surprise that this government would bring forward this legislation? I don't think it's a surprise to anybody sitting on this side of the House. I don't think it's a surprise to many people in the province. It also fits in with a sort of a national perspective that we see from our present minority government Prime Minister and his sense of control on many different things.

We've heard over the last couple of weeks some of the comments from the federal members of parliament who have been identified by Elections Canada as breaking the rules around how the 2006 election goes, and I think that includes people also that were elected in Saskatchewan. And their comments talk about, oh well this is just a little administrative problem or this is that kind of thing. I think it goes fundamentally to the perspective that is brought forward by members of the federal Conservative Party by the members of this present Saskatchewan Party government which is, we'll create the rules; we'll figure out what they're doing, and we're going to restrict the ability of others to participate in some of the democratic processes.

Mr. Speaker, this is wrong-headed legislation. It's inappropriate for Saskatchewan people who always have prided themselves in including everybody in making decisions and, Mr. Speaker, I think that it would be important for the Minister of Justice to seriously take a look at pulling this legislation from this House. Because it's not going to serve the interests of his party, of this legislature, of the people of Saskatchewan. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — The member from Regina Lakeview has moved adjourned debate on Bill No. 161. Is the House in agreement?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — Agreed.

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 Acting Speaker (Bradshaw): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I rise today to speak on *The Local Government Election Act* amendment, the consequential amendments Act. It's interesting to note, flipping through the Bill, looking at some of the changes being made, the biggest change of course that is obvious is that it's changing the municipal elections, the timing of the municipal elections, which has been something that SUMA and SARM have asked

for. And of course we would definitely support that as well because it would allow people who serve in elected office at the municipal level more time to build up expertise and experience, rather than the current three-year cycle that everyone is on. And I think that all constituents would benefit by that.

It's interesting though that in the same legislation . . . My colleague from Lakeview was just discussing the requirement for photo ID. It's also in this legislation and it's kind of interesting that it just kind of slid in there. The same arguments that my colleague made are certainly pertinent to putting it in this legislation. Any vote at any level of government has to be free and democratic, and I think people who have seen that the request or the requirement for photo ID in the upcoming elections are really all very worried how this will affect them in their ability to vote this year.

Particularly difficult are seniors who definitely don't all have a driver's licence, who don't have photo ID, who don't have the ability to go out. Many people don't have power bills. They don't pay for them themselves in some of the complexes that they live in. So if your second form of ID is a power bill or some other utility bill, many people don't pay their utility bills; they're included in their rent. So it is going to disenfranchise many citizens in Saskatchewan.

I know my colleague from Lakeview called it wrong-headed. I think it's actually quite interesting that a government who talks about accountability and transparency would make this overt move to disenfranchise so many of Saskatchewan's citizens. And it's interesting the groups that would be targeted or affected by this which are seniors, low-income families, renters, and also students aren't very happy. So I think . . . And for sure, Aboriginal and First Nations, Métis people.

I don't understand the logic of putting it in for this election. There was some comment made by the Minister of Justice that this was to keep up with what's happening across the country. I notice that BC [British Columbia] has got a challenge to this, so I'm not sure what would drive us to step into this right before an election, what benefit it would have. And I'm assuming legislative changes would be for the benefit of the public. I really don't see the benefit to the public in these changes.

And I don't see any of the explanations either in second reading speeches or in news releases that would support this as being a change that would enhance the voting experience or increase the participation in the democratic process. Right now we have — and not just Saskatchewan but across Canada has — quite a low record of turnout for voters.

And so we need to have a discussion with all voters. What would be more likely to get you to the polls? Is it online voting? Is it making it easier to come to the poll and not have to show all these pieces of ID? Many of those things haven't been discussed with the stakeholders. I mean people who this will affect have not been asked, and I think they're very concerned that this will change the ability that they will have to vote.

And I know the minister in some . . . I think it was some press release or some press conference that he was doing said that this would be better for people, and I really can't see how he would think that. It just doesn't at all suggest that more people will

come out.

He actually suggested that people need to be prepared to vote, so they can't just come out at the last minute: after supper you decide you're going to go. You have to be prepared. You have to think ahead. What do I have to take with me? You haven't got your enumeration card. You don't have an ID. You know, what are you going to need to do?

So we have to look at really quite a massive campaign of education on how do you get to the poll and how do you exercise your democratic right to vote. I think these things have made, these changes will make it more difficult, more onerous, rather than looking at ways to encourage people to come out and vote and to be part of the democratic process. I really, as I say, don't understand why this would have to be something that is so imperative to have before this 2011 election in Saskatchewan in November.

To me, it does smack of intent. And I think if we're looking at the people who this will most negatively impact — First Nations, Métis, low-income people, renters, students, and seniors — those people actually usually don't vote for the government. So to have them be the targeted group, it does beg the question, are you really trying to make their experience more difficult and make it seem that they're not wanted at the voting booth? Nor does the government care about their vote because they don't traditionally get their vote, so let's make sure no one else gets it either. Now how is that fair?

And I think, given the fact that the Chief Electoral Officer appointment was such a fiasco and still is, we now still have an Acting Chief Electoral Officer because the government couldn't, the government members in the selection process couldn't follow the process that's been in place for many, many, many years. It's an independent officer and yet they wanted to meddle, in particular the Premier because the members on the selection committee of his government had agreed. And now, then the Premier . . . somehow things changed and we still only have an Acting Chief Electoral Officer, which speaks quite negatively to how the government, the Sask Party government, participates in the democratic process.

So these changes I think are another signal to the people of Saskatchewan. Thousands and thousands and thousands who fall into the categories that I mentioned, the message to them is we don't care if you have the ability to vote because you're not going to vote for us. And what type of arrogance does that display in a government, that you don't think the whole province should be able to vote? Regardless of how they vote, they should be able to vote. And I think that you're saying to them if you don't vote for us, you're not going to be able to vote. And we're going to make sure that happens. We're going to put as many obstacles in place in front of you so that you can't get to the polls and vote.

I mean, there's no logical explanation to do this in this election unless those are the intentions. And that seems to be quite a negative comment and a negative aspect of this government which, Mr. Deputy Chair, there are quite a few negative aspects of this government, but this is just one of them that I think people are going, why now and why this? And this is going to

affect me. So I think it's a very telling commentary on the attitude of this government and the agenda frankly because I think they've definitely decided that because these groups of people don't traditionally vote for them, that they don't care whether they vote or not. And they want to actually just go a step further and make sure it's really difficult for them to vote.

[15:15]

So to hide this in the local elections Act behind the good news of changing the electoral cycle for municipal governments, I think it shows a bit of a nefarious spirit as well. There's an underhandedness to this and a sneakiness to it, you know, to think that people wouldn't care or wouldn't notice. Because this is on one hand you're giving some good news, on the other hand you're slipping in the bad news, and hopefully people won't notice.

Well I found in my travels, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, that people are noticing and that they are saying that there's things going on that I think the government felt that rural Saskatchewan wouldn't notice. But they are noticing.

And people aren't being fooled. They aren't being fooled by the privatization agenda in the health sector. They're not being fooled. And I know poll after poll talks about people's commitment to publicly owned Crowns, publicly administered and funded health care. And I think people are very concerned about those two items that seem to be sliding away with the Sask Party in government.

And the way that they have to change that is to come to the poll on November 7th and vote, or in the advanced polls and vote. And if you take away that right of those people, then you are interfering in a really direct way with the democratic process. You're not just obstructing the appointment of an independent officer as the Chief Electoral Officer. You are actually impeding people's right to vote.

And I think people will understand this. They do understand already. If they don't have photo ID, they can't vote. This is what this means. And I think people who hear about this are definitely very unhappy, in fact angry. What does this mean to me? Why can't I vote? Why do I need to jump through these hoops? Why is it necessary now?

And I don't think there's been a good answer from the Sask Party and from the government. There hasn't been a good answer about why now and why particularly it will affect these people.

And what does it mean to those people who are traditionally not Sask Party supporters? It tells them that you're interfering in my democratic right. I have a right not to vote for you, but you're preventing me from coming to the polls. That says a lot about the government's agenda and about frankly the arrogance of assuming that people won't notice. Riding on a popularity high, thinking that there's things that they can slide in that people won't notice, they do so at their own peril. I mean, you can only sit on a high horse for so long before it bucks you off. And I think that people do understand what this means to them and to their rights, and they'll watch more closely.

We've seen the rights of people to be consulted on many ways in the last few sessions, that's been eroded. The government's totally ignored that process, ignored people's input.

We see poll after poll, people talking about how they're very concerned about the privatization of the Crowns. And the government speaks a lot about, oh, their commitment to having publicly owned Crowns. And yet, piece by piece, SaskTel is being sold off. And everybody knows it. I mean, SaskTel people know it. People in the province know it. Why do we have Save Our Crowns, a big organization forming to fight back for this? The Sask Party convention heard it. People are getting the message out.

So you can't hide. You can't hide these things. I don't know if there's that degree of arrogance in the Sask Party that you think that you're the emperor that has no clothes, no one will mention it. Or the elephant in the room that no one's going to notice that you're thumping around on everybody's rights, and that you're sitting down on the desk and it's breaking.

I think people do notice. And I think that there is a level of arrogance that assumes people won't notice in Saskatchewan. They do know and they are watching. And it is going to backfire because people really do prize, they prize their health care. They prize their Crown corporations. And they prize their democracy and they definitely prize their right to vote. And if you start jockeying around with that, meddling in that process, interfering with their rights, you will have a backlash. And people will, they will speak up and will be heard.

And I think that the government . . . Like I said, I don't understand the agenda unless it's as stark as I've laid out because otherwise there just doesn't seem a logical reason to be doing this. There's no big fraud scandals happening at polls that this has to be brought in for. No evidence to suggest that. It just seems like an interesting move.

And basically when confronted with some of these, it's because of these three demographics that — like the seniors, the First Nations and Métis, and low-income or rental families and students — don't vote for you. Nobody even denies it in the Sask Party. They think it's funny. So I don't think people that have their democratic rights taken away from them will think it's funny, and I'm pretty sure that they're going to be able to say so.

And so I really don't think that this is something that anybody's going to support, certainly not on our side are going to be supporting, no matter where you hide it. If you put it in two different Acts, it's still not going to matter. It's still not going to be something that we will support, and we've certainly heard from the people of Saskatchewan that they don't support it either.

And we need to speak up for them, those that are certainly disenfranchised, like seniors. You don't see them getting up and coming down to this legislature. You don't see low-income people coming down because they just simply can't. They can't leave their jobs. They can't leave their homes. There's people that don't get to come and speak out at this legislature who still need to have somebody to speak for them, and I think this is one way that people need to hear. They need to hear these sorts

of speeches. They need to hear these comments on these Bills, that there are people that know what's happening and that there are people who support them and their democratic right to vote, and that there are people who will speak up against it and do everything that they possibly can to have this not happen. And I think this is . . .

An Hon. Member: — Hear, hear! Shed some light on it.

Ms. Junor: — And my colleague from Cumberland says we need to shed light on this. Well we absolutely do. I mean we can't, we can't . . . I think the Sask Party expects people to be in a dark hole and not come out and have a look. And I think that might work for a groundhog, but it doesn't work for the people in Saskatchewan. They do want to have a look. And they do value those things I was talking about. They do value health care, publicly funded and administered. They do value the Crowns. And they do value their democratic rights.

So the Sask Party's tampering with all three, frankly. And I think those things are what people need the right to say no to. And the right to say no comes at the ballot box on election day. And so it does seem to be an odd coincidence that this government has put these changes in to make sure that fewer and fewer of those people can come to the ballot box on November 7th and say no.

That I think bears some really, really glaring public scrutiny because I think that does speak to the agenda of this government. It speaks to the intent of this government. It speaks to the integrity of this government. For a government who talks about transparency and accountability, it's a farce. It is a farce when you see something like this come in. This is what will happen to people at the ballot box in the democratic process. It does make it a farce.

So I think that people will definitely want to hear the debate. They want to be heard themselves. We're hearing from many of these people, talking about what this means to them, and they don't like it. And just because they can't come here and speak doesn't mean that they don't have very strong feelings about this.

And I think it's an extremely black mark on the Sask Party to put this forward as a government and to try and disenfranchise voters who they frankly don't think are theirs. That is pretty low for a government to be doing.

And with those comments, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Not very democratic.

Ms. Junor: — That's a totally undemocratic government. With those comments, I would definitely . . . As I said, we will not be supporting this. I would like to adjourn debate at this time because many of my colleagues have thoughts similar to this and certainly want to have them put on the record to show their constituents. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — The member from Saskatoon Eastview has moved adjournment on Bill No. 162. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — Agreed.

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to continue my comments on Bill No. 159, *An Act to amend The University of Regina Act*. I spoke for a brief period of time on this Bill during the fall sitting of this session, Mr. Speaker, after the Bill was introduced. And as I commented at that time, essentially the purpose of the Bill is to harmonize the election of chancellor with the current, recently changed rules governing the University of Saskatchewan so that that election and other election proceedings for the University of Regina are harmonized similar or identical to the procedures at the University of Saskatchewan.

The sense that the two universities would have to be governed in exactly the same way is not necessarily one that I personally agree with. I have no objections to the proposed changes. And if they are, as the government says they are, done at the initiative of the University of Regina, perhaps looking at the example University of Saskatchewan, saying that's an example we want to follow, well that certainly, Mr. Speaker, should carry the day.

But there should not be an assumption that the universities are twins. They are not. And therefore there shouldn't be an assumption on the part of any government that they necessarily need to be governed in exactly the same way, that the chancellor needs to be selected in the same way. The size of convocation for the two universities would be significantly different, for example, Mr. Speaker, and therefore the group of people being to a certain extent disenfranchised when it comes down to election of the chancellor are a different group of people.

The history of elections for chancellor for the University of Regina may or may not have proportionally different turnout results than the University of Saskatchewan. But certainly there's no requirement that Saskatchewan's two universities be governed in exactly the same way.

And there are of course other institutions bearing that name, Mr. Speaker, and they're not governed in an identical way as the University of Saskatchewan, nor should they be. So that requirement, certainly if it was felt to be there by either the University of Regina or the Government of Saskatchewan, I don't believe should actually be held to have been there, Mr. Speaker.

As I commented when I spoke to this Bill earlier in the session during the fall sitting, universities are rather unique institutions. They are unique educational institutions and, I would argue, unique post-secondary institutions. They are not special; they

are not better than other post-secondary institutions. Some members of the Assembly know that my son is currently enrolled at SIAST, and I would suggest that his choice about an educational institution is as good as one can make in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so that's not my argument about universities. I'm not arguing that there is a hierarchy here in any sense but that universities to a certain extent serve a different educational need, and they serve other functions within our society quite separate and distinct from polytechnics, if I can use that term. Universities have a history of independence. And universities traditionally in their origins hundreds of years ago were not founded by governments, and they grew up alongside governments. And arguably in the modern age, governments, states, have negotiated terms of engagement with universities. And that's quite a different history than the history of public education from which some post-secondary education and the SIAST model grows out of, the sort of history of K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education which was founded by governments and by the larger public.

That said, of course, much of the funding of universities comes from the broader public. Arguably not enough. And certainly in the last 30 years, Mr. Speaker, since some of us first attended universities, the proportion that students pay of the freight, the cost of the freight that they pay for their education, for their degree has grown, Mr. Speaker. And I would suggest in the case of some liberal arts students, they pay a majority, if not almost all, the costs of their education whereas of course some students in heavily technical fields pay proportionally less. But I think overall there's no dispute that students are paying much, much more of their education than they did 30 years ago, Mr. Speaker. And I guess people of my generation were the benefits of a transfer, perhaps an intergenerational transfer of wealth that's benefited us but is not there to nearly the same extent for students today.

[15:30]

So universities are funded by those two main sources. They are also funded because they do research. Some of that is public money; some of that is not public money, Mr. Speaker, but they are not in that way identical to other public educational institutions or even other post-secondary educational institutions. Although other post-secondary institutions also charge tuition, Mr. Speaker, the cost to the student, particularly for the shorter diploma courses, is considerably less than it is for a university student. And then a university student, a graduate student who's involved in a scholarship or research as well, Mr. Speaker, has additional costs and those aren't necessarily treated the same way by this government as the costs of undergraduate students.

And the opposition has spoken about that issue quite often, Mr. Speaker, and has been looking for redress on that issue for quite a while, Mr. Speaker. And it looks like it's not likely to be forthcoming from this government.

There is an educational role, of course, that universities play, and there is a research role that universities play that is certainly unique to them as educational institutions. There are other research institutions, but universities are significant research

institutions, and I think, within the province of Saskatchewan, far and away the most significant sources of innovation, Mr. Speaker.

There is also a public role, a role that's played in the social, cultural, and intellectual life of the community that the university serves that really there is no other institution to serve. And the founders of this province are to be commended on their ambitious goal that there be a university in this province because no other institution can easily pick up that important role of independent critique and criticism of policy that a university can play.

And I note for example that, not tied to any interest whatsoever, with no partisan agenda, no party discipline being imposed upon them, that academics in political science and in law, familiar with human rights legislation and the advance and development of human rights legislation, are speaking out against the Bill that follows this one in number, Mr. Speaker, Bill 160, on the abolishment of human rights tribunals and really, really the end of, the end of or the near end of, if not the extinction, certainly the near extinction of human rights case law and adjudication of human rights complaints in the province of Saskatchewan. And these critics are out of reach of the government and they are even out of reach of anybody's political party discipline. I have no control; nobody in the opposition has any control over what these people say and what they do because they have this independence that's provided by being part of an institution which has autonomy, values debate, thought, free thought, free speech, and even the discussion of unpopular or new ideas, Mr. Speaker. And no other institution in our society really has that or can have that kind of role in a society, you know.

Imagine the educational function of the university being replaced by a different institution and pull in more of what a university teaches into a polytechnic, technical school type of model. You can imagine a government — and this will probably be a mistake because you never know where research is going to go — but a government being very interested in a particular kind of research or a particular kind of result and creating research institutions to work on innovation and playing the role that universities play.

But it would be an oxymoron to have a government create an institution where people are independent of government and independent of party and independent of other institutions and ask to, implicitly ask to examine public policy or development in society and to research them or comment upon them, Mr. Speaker. That of course is something that is unique to universities. And, Mr. Speaker, I guess these comments are directed at reminding all of us of the value of the universities that exist in the province of Saskatchewan, their importance.

And although it is very important not to reduce that importance to statistics about graduates, about income levels of graduates, about even research dollars attracted to the province of Saskatchewan, as important as all those things are, the spirit of the university, of its free inquiry, of its independence from the government of the day or other powerful institutions in society — that is part of our democratic heritage, Mr. Speaker.

And our democratic heritage is more complicated than just the

right to vote, which unfortunately is also up for debate in this Assembly, in this session, and in this sitting, Mr. Speaker. It's much more complex than that, and the university plays a very fundamental and important role in that democratic heritage.

And so how the university is governed is vitally important. And here in this legislation, we are dealing with at least two of the institutions that govern the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, and how these are selected is going to be harmonized by this legislation. One is the senate, which provides for public input, and the chancellor who, I appreciate, has a role in the senate but also a role on the board of governors which very importantly, because of the number of government appointments to the board of governors, is limited to financial matters and financial governance of the universities.

The issue of academic freedom and academic programs is left to the council of the universities and that preserves the academic freedom and independence of professors and others at the university of both Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. And it is that vital division of powers that this legislation addresses in a minor way, Mr. Speaker, but it still addresses that issue.

And so the question is here again, is the change in the election of a chancellor, as has already been done by this government in the case of the University of Saskatchewan, does that change strengthen, weaken, or not affect that very important division of powers, Mr. Speaker?

Again we would want to be confident that this has the support of the University of Regina, whatever that might mean, Mr. Speaker. And it may have the support of the administration but not necessarily of the senate. And I know that as some Saskatoon members and members from elsewhere in the province were concerned about the changes in *The University of Saskatchewan Act*, some Regina members who have not yet had an opportunity to speak and other members from elsewhere in Saskatchewan may be concerned about this change which, as I said at the beginning of my remarks this afternoon, is not required by the change that was made at *The University of Saskatchewan Act* by any stretch of the imagination, Mr. Speaker.

So to allow this discussion to continue and to allow other members to participate in it, Mr. Speaker, and knowing that I spoke at some length earlier in the session on this Bill, I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Meewasin has moved adjournment of 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 Speaker: — Agreed. 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 Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in on the discussion this afternoon for adjourned debates on Bill No. 160, *An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and to make consequential amendments to The Labour Standards Act*, Bill 160.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a few members of the Assembly who have had the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation, with remarks being made by the minister and some members from the opposition. So it is my pleasure to add a few thoughts around the discussion that has been proposed by the minister, Mr. Speaker, on changes that in his view should occur in the area of human rights legislation here in the province.

The changes that are being suggested by the minister, Mr. Speaker, is to essentially do away with the process that has been in place for individuals to air complaints of discrimination — a tribunal process that has been put in place, as in other places in Canada, that allows an individual to come forward with a complaint when they feel like they have been discriminated against in some manner.

The current legislation allows for discrimination complaints based on a number of factors and these include race, colour, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, marital status, family status, place of origin or ancestry as some examples of the basis for a discrimination complaint. And the context in which those complaints can come forward are also . . . There's a number of different examples that are provided such as tenancy, employment, employment advertisements, publications, public services and facilities, a purchase of property, and discrimination by unions or associations. So we do know that from time to time there are instances in society where discrimination takes place based on the aspects and in the context that I listed just now.

Our province's motto, Mr. Speaker, is "from many peoples, strength." So we know that Saskatchewan is a diverse place. That's one of the sort of founding models or statements that has been used by elected officials and used by the provincial government for some time when it comes to looking at the Saskatchewan context. And that is a good one because we in this Assembly do come from many backgrounds. Some would suggest, and rightfully so, that perhaps we could have even more backgrounds represented here in the Assembly.

[15:45]

But we know that our Saskatchewan culture and our Saskatchewan sense of place is comprised of many different types of people from different backgrounds, holding different views and living life in different ways but within the legal context and framework that is available to everyone here in Saskatchewan, within the rights that are awarded to everyone that is living in Saskatchewan.

And as it presently stands, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has been one way in which

individuals have been able to exercise their rights if they feel like they have been discriminated against for whatever reason. And we know, while we would like to think that everyone in society can get along nicely and have a general orientation based on mutual respect and tolerance, sadly we do know that from time to time that is not the case here in the province and that discrimination can in fact occur. And when it does occur, Mr. Speaker, it is a very hurtful thing, and I think all members would agree that when discrimination occurs, it is a step backwards for our society and for our province.

So with that in mind, it's important when looking at any type of human rights legislation and how complaints are handled and dealt with, it's important to remember that it's our role and duty as legislators to set up a framework that allows individuals' rights to be respected and to allow individuals to live with a sense of confidence and peacefulness and happiness that all Saskatchewan people want as we carry out our daily activities of working and pursuing recreational pursuits and finding a place to live and going to an educational institution and raising children in our province. And thankfully that is the approach that most Saskatchewan people take when it comes to interacting with our fellow neighbours in this province.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, from time to time discrimination does occur, so it's necessary to have a framework in place that allows people to voice complaints and to have an injustice dealt with properly and effectively. What Bill 60 is essentially proposing to change about the way human rights are handled in the province is to do away with the tribunal system that has been in place where individuals can voice their concerns. And in doing away with or eliminating the tribunal process, what would take place is a process of forced mediation. And if that did not, if that was not successful, Mr. Speaker, then the issue at hand could be referred to the judicial system for it to be handled through the court process. So that is essentially what this legislation is proposing.

Now there has been a discussion in the Assembly as to whether or not that is a smart thing to do, what might be some of the pitfalls, and perhaps what could be some of the benefits about taking that approach.

We know that . . . I guess as an opposition member and looking at the issue of human rights and the role that government should take, Mr. Speaker, I do think back in recent months some of the instances that we've had in the news and in the current events where the government has taken a position on human rights that to me would indicate a less than ambitious agenda when it comes to defending some of the rights of individuals in the province.

And the issue I'm thinking of in particular, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of marriage commissioners and the legal appeal or court process that was under way and supported by the government to see if there was another way, to see if marriage commissioners, who do represent the province and are to operate and work within the laws that are put in place and respected in the province, ought to meet the requests that are placed to them from or by Saskatchewan people. And we saw the government support for a process, an appeal process seeking information as to whether or not there is a way around that legislation, of ensuring that individuals in the province have fair and open

access to marriage commissioners and will not face discrimination on that particular aspect.

And in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, instead of the government simply understanding and respecting the law that is in place on that particular issue, they chose to spend valuable resources of time and money in an appeal process that looked for a way out, a way around that — whether there was wiggle room, whether there was a different option — when it was clear I think to most Saskatchewan people that it is the role of a marriage commissioner to in fact complete the duties given to him or her by the province, and that the services they should provide should be done in a way that does not discriminate against those who are operating within the legal framework of the particular province, in this case Saskatchewan. So instead of simply understanding if that is the role, the government chose to take a different approach and spend valuable resources of time and money in a legal process.

Now some might say, well that's not the biggest deal in the world. But I think it speaks to an attitude around human rights, an attitude around legislation that guarantees the rights of individuals in the province to have equal access to services, that causes me and I know many other people in the province to pause and question or examine thoroughly what may in fact be the motives behind this piece of legislation, which is closely related to the issues that I just mentioned around the area of marriage commissioners.

So I think it's fair to ask questions about why the Minister of Justice would choose to bring forward this legislation and what in fact is the goal, whether stated or unstated, that is hoped to be accomplished by having this piece of legislation brought into being in the province of Saskatchewan.

So I'd like to talk, Mr. Speaker, about a few of the components around the legislation, components that are in place under the tribunal system, and then components . . . and then how the proposed changes may indeed affect many Saskatchewan people in a way that is not in their best interest for advancing the issue of human rights legislation here in the province.

The one issue about mediation and how this would be the process that individuals with a complaint would seek to solve the issue with the person that they deem has discriminated against them . . . The process of mediation, while in principle I certainly support the idea and I think mediation is an effective way to handle many types of cases or many types of disputes within society, I do not think however that it is a one-fits-all approach that will solve all issues.

In certain types of disputes, if it's a property matter or even if it's a family dispute coming out of a family breakdown, mediation can indeed serve a role to handle that in an effective way that both sides of the equation can live with and be happy with the end result. When dealing with issues of discrimination, because of the very personal nature of complaints — and at the beginning I listed many of the examples of what can be the basis for a complaint, things such as race, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability — the relationship, Mr. Speaker, between the complainant and the other individual, there can often be a very unequal power relationship there based on or as a result of the type of discrimination that took place.

And while in a situation in a marriage for example where there are two equals, I think when it's an issue of discrimination based on race for example, Mr. Speaker, the power imbalance can exist which will not allow the mediation to achieve its end, will not allow the mediation to flow smoothly, and in some instances perhaps can reinforce the discrimination that took place between one individual and another.

So while mediation in general, I do support the notion, I think it's positive, it's not without its problems when dealing with the issue of human rights legislation, dealing with the issue of an individual who has been discriminated against because of who they are essentially, Mr. Speaker.

So that is one area where I have some questions and some concerns about how this will in fact play out on the ground and whether it will further the goals of having better and stronger and fairer human rights legislation if that is in fact the goal of members opposite, which I am not necessarily convinced of, Mr. Speaker.

Another issue that comes to my attention, based on the proposed structure of these changes in doing away with the tribunals, is the increased role and power that is awarded to the commissioner in determining what cases can in fact, what cases do in fact warrant a hearing. And, Mr. Speaker, these comments are not directed at any one individual, whether that's present or future. This is about designing a system for complaints about human rights that has the necessary checks in place in order to ensure that not one individual has too much control in determining what complaints are taken forward.

In going through the legislation and taking a look at the explanatory notes that are provided with Bill No. 160, *An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that on page 10 of the explanatory notes, and I'm quoting from page 10 at the top, "Clause (g) is repealed and replaced with a new provision that allows the Chief Commissioner to dismiss complaints that do not warrant a hearing."

So while there may be some role for the commissioner to exercise that type of authority, by not having that decision checked by a tribunal, by other individuals, it's not . . . I'm not reassured that in all instances, Mr. Speaker, that the correct decision can in fact stand, that in some instances, perhaps, the check that is provided by tribunals can be very effective in ensuring that all rights of individuals are upheld and are respected. So that's another concern that I have around the proposed changes with doing away with the tribunal system.

I think also, Mr. Speaker, I know when the legislation was introduced to the Assembly, there were a number of stakeholders in the gallery who came, stakeholders in the area of human rights legislation and concerned about advancing the rights of individuals here in the province. And the people in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that in pitching these changes that are proposed in eliminating the tribunals and enhancing the role of the commissioner in dealing with these issues and going the judicial route, it was my understanding that education was pitched as a key component of these changes. And I certainly think the role of education is highly, highly important in our school system and through other measures to

ensure that a knowledge and awareness of human rights is increased and enhanced throughout the province, and that all individuals in society are aware of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to dealing with human rights.

But the legislation, Mr. Speaker, is very quiet on the issue of education. So I think it's important to realize that if there is a stated goal about what these changes will accomplish and bring, it's necessary to have the details in the legislation as to how that goal will be accomplished, and by having details of the educational components absent, that does not reassure me that the educational component is in fact a central part of this proposed legislation. It very well . . . and I fully believe that it is a goal of many individuals involved with the Human Rights Commission, but if that is not explicitly detailed in the legislation and if funding is not tied to those efforts, it doesn't do much good to simply talk about what sort of initiatives could be helpful or could be beneficial to Saskatchewan people. So I think that that is a concern.

And it's interesting when we talk about the promotion of educational initiatives to increase tolerance and increase respect for diversity here in the province, of course those initiatives do take funding and take resources. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the resources that the government devoted to the court process to deal with the marriage commissioners, I wonder if those resources could have been better spent in a way that actually promoted the goals of human rights legislation and increase the awareness in the province of what people's rights and responsibilities are.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, I've highlighted a few of my concerns, having gone through the legislation and some of the earlier remarks by speakers. And I think that some of the concerns I've raised, Mr. Speaker, are also being raised by other individuals in civil society who have some concerns with this approach. And the concerns aren't necessarily . . . the concerns aren't with many of the stated goals of increasing, what is said to increase human rights, increase access, and those initiatives, but it fundamentally questions whether a change in the structure is indeed the appropriate and necessary way to go about achieving those stated goals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read into the public record a letter to the minister, an open letter to the minister from Amnesty International who have voiced some of the concerns that they see around this proposed Bill. And I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to indicate to the public who may be listening and to organizations that have a concern about changes here that may be affecting the issue of human rights in our province in a negative manner, I think it's important to read this letter in order to show that there are those in the province who are not supportive and at peace with the approach that the minister is taking in bringing in these changes.

So the letter from Amnesty International is dated December 10th, 2010, and it states:

Dear Minister,

Amnesty International is writing this open letter to urge

you to reconsider the plans for reform of Saskatchewan's laws and institutions for the protection of human rights in the province, as contained in Bill 160, which you recently introduced in the provincial legislature.

Amnesty International is, in particular, deeply concerned about the proposal in the Bill to abolish the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal and leave adjudication of human rights complaints in the hands of provincial Court of Queen's Bench instead. We are concerned that this will impede access to human rights remedies for many individuals, as court proceedings are inevitably more complex, formal and time-consuming.

We recognize that Bill 160 also proposes changes to the role of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, including an increased focus on dealing with systemic patterns of discrimination and on making use of alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation. Those are enhancements to the system that would very likely make positive contributions to greater human rights protection. But informality and accessibility of the adjudication process itself plays a crucial role in maximizing human rights protection, given the very nature of the complaints and the fact that they are often brought forward by individuals from marginalized groups and sectors in society.

It is well recognized in Canada and globally, that human rights institutions other than the courts have an important role to play in adjudicating human rights complaints. Notably, the Paris Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, expressly set out that a national human rights body, "may be authorized to hear and consider complaints and petitions concerning individual situations."

Across Canada, that is precisely the model that has been adopted in all jurisdictions. Provincially and federally, human rights tribunals with informal procedures that aim to maximize accessibility are empowered to make the first level decision in human rights complaints which proceed to the stage of adjudication. The role of the courts is left to hearing appeals and supervising tribunals. Amnesty International considers that to be best practice.

Such a significant change to the process available to the public of Saskatchewan for enforcing the protection of their rights should, at a minimum, be subject to extensive public consultation. In fact, given what is at stake there should be public consultation before any significant changes are made to human rights legislation, institutions or procedures. It is our understanding that did not take place before Bill 160 was introduced.

Minister, systems for the protection of human rights can most certainly benefit from ongoing improvement. I am writing to you on International Human Rights Day, which marks the 62nd anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is an apt occasion to call on you and your government to commit to an approach to reform that would strengthen

and not risk undermining provincial human rights protection. In that spirit, we urge that, rather than proceed with Bill 160 at this time, your government launch a public consultation process to consider possible reforms that would strengthen the province's human rights laws and institutions.

Sincerely, Alex Neve, Secretary General.

So that public letter, Mr. Speaker, that has been provided by Amnesty International, is available on their website. And I think it clearly outlines some of the concerns that I spoke about, but nicely summarizes the significance of this proposed legislation with respect to human rights law in the province.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that through the human rights tribunals, it has been an effective way in promoting and advancing the issue of human rights for people in Canada and specifically in Saskatchewan. We know it has served that productive role. My question, Mr. Speaker, is in consideration of the less than convincing approach members opposite have had when it comes to the issue of human rights and advancing human rights for all individuals in the province. My question, Mr. Speaker, is whether or not such changes could be accomplished through the back door what they may not be able to do through the front door, that by removing the tribunals in the province, Mr. Speaker, that it essentially ceases the advancement of human rights law here in the province and the advancement of rights for all individuals in Saskatchewan. And my hope, Mr. Speaker, is that that is not the case.

So those are the remarks I have at this time, Mr. Speaker, on Bill 160. While some of the goals that have been stated, Mr. Speaker, in the legislation I would support in principle, but I have concerns, Mr. Speaker, that the overhaul and the approach that the minister is taking on this piece of legislation that it may in fact do more harm than good in addressing some of those goals. And, Mr. Speaker, I am left being less than convinced about the members' opposite conviction as to the role and importance of such pieces of legislation that enshrine the rights of all people in Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will thank members in the Assembly for their time and for the opportunity to contribute to this debate. And I would move to adjourn debate on this Bill at this time. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 160. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 157

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned 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 Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh

Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 157, *An Act to Amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*, henceforth known as *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2010*. This legislation is being done in concert with the amendments to the companion legislation, *The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Act, 2010*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the minister's comments in the second reading of this Bill No. 157, and I want to quote from what the minister said. The minister said:

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan's people have benefited from the province's diversity and wealth of our natural resources. Indeed our current status as a have province in Canada is due in large part to the strong performance of our resource sector.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposition couldn't agree more. We do believe that the resource sector in this province is an important and actual critical asset to this province, Mr. Speaker, having achieved that have status in 2005. That is due in large part that Saskatchewan is so rich in the natural resources that it has, and of course have been managed appropriately in terms of seeing the returns that have been provided to the people of Saskatchewan because of that.

He goes on to say:

Investments made in our resource industries have created job opportunities for our growing population, strengthened the prosperity of our communities, and provided revenue for important social programs and infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, again we agree that the returns from these resources that Saskatchewan is so rich in are critical to providing the necessary revenue that we require to build upon the infrastructure that is needed in Saskatchewan, and especially the social programs that are needed in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And those social programs go beyond simply programs under the Ministry of Social Services, Mr. Speaker. I'm of course talking about health care and education and all of these very important things, Mr. Speaker, that are currently not being properly addressed by the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Party government is underfunding, for instance, the Catholic school systems in this province compared to the public school systems in this province, Mr. Speaker. Now that underfunding, Mr. Speaker, has been going on for a year now. And what has been done to correct that, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing. What assurances have the people in the Catholic school systems been given that that will be corrected in the upcoming budget, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the minister will say in his remarks on Bill 157 that they feel important about funding the social programs in this province when in actuality it's quite the opposite. They are not looking seriously at what needs to be properly addressed and properly funded in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now he goes on to say:

Ensuring that resource industries continue to invest in our province requires our government to provide those industries with the best services possible. We need to continually seek new and innovative ways to make our processes more efficient and effective for the industry.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we see exactly why the Sask Party government under that minister and under that Premier have absolutely no interest in doing a royalty review in this province, Mr. Speaker. Because all they care about, Mr. Speaker, from what the minister says himself, is industry, Mr. Speaker. They don't care about how much Saskatchewan people are getting from the resources that they own in this province. They don't care about the fact that there is more money to be had for the social programs that need to be funded in this province. They don't care as per the minister's own words. And he doesn't just speak on behalf of himself, Mr. Speaker, he speaks on behalf of the government. He speaks on behalf of the Premier.

So now we know why they have absolutely no interest in doing a royalty review in this province, Mr. Speaker, because that's not who they're concerned about. They're not concerned about the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're concerned about their friends in the industry, Mr. Speaker. That's who they're concerned about.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP feels very strongly about the industry moving forward in this province, Mr. Speaker, very strongly. But the NDP also is deeply concerned about the fact that those natural resources are owned by the people of this province, and therefore the people of this province should also reap the benefits and reap the rewards of those resources, Mr. Speaker. There has to be a proper balance, and the Sask Party government is way off base.

When we are seeing a 5 cent return on the dollar, Mr. Speaker, a 5 cent return on the dollar in the potash industry, you can't tell me with a straight face that you feel that that's appropriate, Mr. Speaker. There is no way that they can do that unless the only people that they're worried about is, as the minister has said, is the industry. All they're worried about is their friends in the industry. They're not worried about what the return is for the people of Saskatchewan. They're not worried about what programs in Saskatchewan can be funded by the revenue that the people of Saskatchewan should be seeing from those resources, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Sask Party government stands for.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you've noticed I'm suffering from a bit of laryngitis due to a very bad cold and a busy weekend, but I'm going to continue on because apparently my friends opposite have a deep desire to hear what my thoughts are on Bill 157, Mr. Speaker. So I'm more than willing to share them with them despite the fact that I may have to soothe my laryngitis this evening with some hot lemon tea or something.

So, Mr. Speaker, Bill 157 is a complex Bill with implications in a number of levels for both the industry and for industry players. And it's obviously going to take some time to review and consult with the various stakeholders across the province and the associations responsible to see whether or not they truly

agree with the changes being made and whether or not they help the industry move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Now we've seen a reduction in oil production from 2007. At the same time we saw a change in government, Mr. Speaker. Coincidence? Perhaps. I think not. Mr. Speaker, I think that there's many reasons why we're seeing that. And we also saw a reduction in gas production from 2007, at the time of change of government, as well. And we actually see a reduction in the amount of wells being drilled in our province from 2007. We also saw a general reduction or contraction of the economy last year in the range of 3.9 per cent after being adjusted when the final numbers came in, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

We also saw a situation where the *Sask Trends* said that Saskatchewan really has no economic growth since the change of government. The improvements in 2008 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well they laugh, Mr. Speaker. They laugh, but these aren't my words, Mr. Speaker. This is coming from *Sask Trends*. This is a third party official that is saying that there is no economic growth, no real economic growth since the Sask Party government came into power in 2007. The improvements in 2008 were really as a result of the inflationary cost of items that consumers had to pay.

Now again they laugh, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, they're sitting there. They're smug. They have no interest in listening to what Saskatchewan people are saying about the fact that they want to see more return on the natural resources they own, Mr. Speaker. They're smug because they don't want to listen to the fact that the education experts are talking about the fact that there is underfunding in the education system in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And they're smug despite the fact that the Catholic school systems are underfunded compared to the public school systems in this province, Mr. Speaker. In Regina alone, it amounts to \$2.7 million, Mr. Speaker, \$2.7 million for the Catholic school systems in terms of underfunding compared to the public school systems in the city of Regina alone, and those numbers are even more dramatic elsewhere throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. But again that's not something that the Sask Party government wants to hear about because they're above all that, apparently.

So as I said, the improvements in 2008 were really as a result of the inflationary cost of items that consumers had to pay. And in fact since then we've seen a contraction in the economy which my friend, the member from Rosemont, the MLA for Regina Rosemont, has expressed over and over and over again through presenting petitions in the House, Mr. Speaker, that we've actually seen a contraction in the economy. But again is that something that is alarming to the Sask Party government? Not at all, Mr. Speaker. Are they going to conduct a royalty review because of that? No. Actually we've heard definitively that they have no desire to do that, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that we are, Saskatchewan people, are not seeing a fair return on their ownership of those natural resources, Mr. Speaker.

In the minister's second reading he also referred to the fact that some of the changes are a result of a New West Partnership. Well doesn't that lead us to a whole new discussion, Mr. Speaker. And they're laughing and smiling now. They're so

proud of themselves. They're so proud of themselves, Mr. Speaker, because they were able to do one over on everyone again, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to the 2007 election, we had a great big debate in this province about TILMA, which is what? The Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement, Mr. Speaker. Big debate in this province about TILMA. What happened, Mr. Speaker? There were public consultations that were undertaken by the NDP government at the time — public consultations all around the province. I know it's a novel idea but it's something that really should be done.

And throughout those consultations, Mr. Speaker, what did we find out? We found out that Saskatchewan people did not want to sign on to TILMA. That was something that they saw as a negative in many different ways — especially, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities of Saskatchewan. The municipalities of Saskatchewan knew that this was going to be a bad deal for Saskatchewan.

So what happened out of those consultations, Mr. Speaker? The NDP government decided that it wasn't prudent for the NDP government at that time to sign on to TILMA with Alberta and BC. The Saskatchewan Party opposition at the time, Mr. Speaker, decided that it wasn't prudent to sign on to TILMA, the agreement with BC and Alberta. And they said, no way would they do it. They wouldn't sign on to TILMA because their stakeholders, especially in the rural municipalities of Saskatchewan, told them loud and clear that TILMA was not a good deal for Saskatchewan.

Well let's just flip the clock forward a bit. We get to 2007. Sask Party gets elected into government. All of a sudden they feel that they can do whatever they want, sort of like the member for Melville-Saltcoats was saying that he did when he was in opposition. In opposition he could say and do anything. Well it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because now that the Sask Party is in government, they're still doing the same thing. They're still saying and doing whatever they want regardless of what Saskatchewan people have to say, Mr. Speaker. And Saskatchewan people said loud and clear, TILMA is a bad deal for Saskatchewan.

So what happens after the Sask Party government gets elected in 2007? Well there is a new discussion. There's a new discussion. BC and Alberta know full well that the Sask Party can't sign on to TILMA because that would be an obvious break of a promise — although they've broken other promises, Mr. Speaker — but it would be an obvious break of a promise, Mr. Speaker. So what do they do? They have discussions and there's this new deal that's concocted and called a New West Partnership. And oddly enough, Mr. Speaker, when you read the New West Partnership deal, it looks vaguely like . . . Well, no. It doesn't look vaguely like, it looks a whole lot like TILMA, Mr. Speaker. It has great similarities to TILMA.

But what happened when that New West Partnership agreement was signed between BC and Alberta, Mr. Speaker? Were there public consultations undertaken by the Sask Party government at the time? No. Did they hold consultations across the province to see if the New West Partnership was something that Saskatchewan people were willing to sign on to? No. Did they

listen to what Saskatchewan people had to say about the New West Partnership, Mr. Speaker? No they did not, Mr. Speaker. So instead of signing on to TILMA, which they knew they couldn't do because they vehemently said that they would not sign on to TILMA, they call it a new deal . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would remind the member that the debate is on *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act* and I ask the member to tie her comments into the Bill No. 157.

Ms. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason I'm speaking about the New West Partnership is because it was in the minister's remarks upon second reading, talking about the fact that Bill 157 is resulting as a change of the signing on of New West Partnership, Mr. Speaker.

So the New West Partnership, as I said, was something that the Sask Party government signed on to after they were elected in 2007 without the same type of consultations that took place under the NDP government with respect to TILMA, despite the fact that the New West Partnership agreement looks a whole lot like TILMA, Mr. Speaker.

So there you see the transparency, the accountability, and the willingness to listen to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, the residents of Saskatchewan, the owners of the natural resource that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker. Their Sask Party government is not willing to listen to them. They will say what they want and they will do what they want regardless of what the people of the province think about the subject, Mr. Speaker. So we see again that although the Sask Party government talks about consultation, it doesn't come to fruition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the minister's second reading remarks he also says, quote:

I note the consultation ministry officials had over the summer on amendments to this Act, with companies and officials representing the two main industry associations: the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Small Exporters and Producers Association of Canada. Ministry officials have consulted with the Surface Rights Arbitration Board and representatives of the Saskatchewan Mining Association and Saskatchewan Potash Producers Association.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister has listed off one, two, three, four, five different consultations . . . I mean consultations have taken place with five different named organizations. But, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't give me or the opposition much comfort in knowing that those consultations actually took place or took place in a proper way. Because as we saw with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act*, despite the fact that there were six different organizations that were referenced in that minister's speech upon second reading as having been consulted, five of the six organizations said that no, they were not consulted with, Mr. Speaker. Five of the six organizations that were named by the minister in her second reading speech were not actually consulted with, Mr. Speaker, and were quite upset that they were named by the minister in her second reading speech.

So the fact that the Minister for Energy and Resources has named these organizations as having been consulted is cold comfort to the opposition, Mr. Speaker, because we don't know for sure whether that's actually taken place and we don't know for sure whether they were properly consulted with. Some of the work that's being done on the opposition side is to ensure that those consultations were properly constituted and that their voices were correctly portrayed in terms of the changes that are being undertaken, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, any time you're moving to consolidation or amalgamation of rules in an industry, whether they be with Alberta and Saskatchewan or any other jurisdiction, it's important to understand the impact because the impact can be both positive and negative. And we want to fully understand what those impacts are, Mr. Speaker. And we also need to fully understand the impact on our province, on our producers, and the net result that comes about of those changes to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the complexity of this legislation and the breadth and depth of changes, it's going to take us some time to do the required consultations. Because as I said, we can't be sure what we're hearing is factual because we've heard it before and, quite frankly, found out quite the opposite. And we want to ensure that the meetings with these individuals and organizations and associations have been properly constituted and have been properly referenced and represented, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to allow some others to get in on debate of further Bills, so I'm going to adjourn debate at this time. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Walsh Acres has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 157, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 144

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 144 — *The Litter Control Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Taylor: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to speak during the second reading of Bill No. 144. This is an Act known as *The Litter Control Amendment Act, 2010*. A number of my colleagues have spoken on this Bill to this point, Mr. Speaker, and there are a number of returning themes, Mr. Speaker, that come forward in this piece of legislation that I think we should not lose sight of.

So here at the beginning of the spring sitting of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, this is the first chance we've had to address the specifics of Bill 144 since we left here in December, Mr. Speaker. Since that time, we've had the opportunity to do some

consultation throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, and what we found are a continuing list of questions growing and, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, some continuing confusion regarding this legislation.

But, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that there is . . . In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, there is some general support for the ideas that of course we need to continue to do the things that are necessary to reduce litter, but also, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have got this beverage container recycling system in place. We've got the ability not just in terms of reducing litter but also, Mr. Speaker, protecting the environment and also enhancing the recyclability of product, Mr. Speaker.

So without fully understanding all the details in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, when I talk with individuals across the province, there is a general understanding that this legislation, *The Litter Control Act*, Mr. Speaker, needs to continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of the people of our province.

[16:30]

I think it's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that we realize that all of this began in 1973. When the original Act was passed in 1973, the purpose of the Act was to provide the provincial government with authority to address litter-related issues. Now we have to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that the ideas that we hold today about the environment and recycling, protecting the environment, ensuring that product use gets reused, Mr. Speaker, this, all that we know today, wasn't known in 1973, Mr. Speaker. But we did know that we have to do something about controlling the products that people, without thinking seriously, Mr. Speaker, have a tendency just to throw away. And in Saskatchewan over the years we've done a tremendous job of reducing the number of items that go into our landfills.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's been some tremendous indirect benefit from all of this as well. I think every one of us in this Assembly, and I would bet most of the people who are listening to the debate today, have used the services of Sarcen in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I use the Sarcen facilities across the province on a regular basis, a personal basis, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy my visits to the Sarcen office in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. It has now been in a couple of different locations over the years, Mr. Speaker, but Sarcen in The Battlefords now, Mr. Speaker, is in the industrial park of The Battlefords. And, Mr. Speaker, it has good hours and provides tremendous benefit, employment benefit, Mr. Speaker, to a considerable number of people through The Battlefords.

While I'm on the subject of Sarcen and The Battlefords, I think as most people in The Battlefords know but not everyone across the province would know, Sarcen is run by Battlefords Trade and Education Centre. Mr. Speaker, years ago this used to be known as the Battlefords Sheltered Workshop. But as things have evolved, Mr. Speaker, and as people became more knowledgeable about inclusion of people with physical and mental challenges, Mr. Speaker, we've found ways to ensure that everyone in our economy, Mr. Speaker, and in our communities, can lead active and rewarding lives.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Battlefords Trade and Education Centre previously operated Sarcen along the railway lines across from

the old armory. The old armory was, and still is, Mr. Speaker . . . Now it's 100 years old. That building owned and operated by Battlefords Trade and Education Centre has pretty much used up its capacity in that 100-year-old building. There's now a proposal, Mr. Speaker, that would see Battlefords Trade and Education Centre move to a new facility working closely with the Battlefords Residential Services Inc., to ensure that we have day programs available to people who are not able to work in the normal eight-hour-a-day, 40-hour-a-week employment programs throughout our community.

Well, Mr. Speaker, at various times over the next little while, representatives from Battlefords Trade and Education Centre, representatives from Battlefords Residential Services Inc., will be making representation to government to ensure that the services that they've provided in the past, which includes the development of and the delivery of Sarcen services in The Battlefords, has the support, the ongoing support, of the Government of Saskatchewan, and that perhaps . . . and should, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the next year, begin developing a new facility to encourage the continuation of the development of and deployment of day programming for these wonderful people within our community.

But every time I'm in the Sarcen building in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, I have numerous conversations with the individuals who work there, Mr. Speaker, and every time I leave that building I leave with knowledge that I did not have when I went in, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy the people who are working at Sarcen. They are a great benefit to those of us in our community.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, this legislation isn't specific to Sarcen. But what has evolved over the years, Mr. Speaker, through *The Litter Control Act* and the development of Sarcen, has led us in a number of different directions. But what we've got here, Mr. Speaker, is a piece of legislation . . . And this is why the public doesn't fully understand this and why we need to see additional information coming forward. Mr. Speaker, this legislation has a retroactivity provision that takes us back to 1998 or roughly 12 years, Mr. Speaker. It's a retroactive provision that essentially protects the Government of Saskatchewan against legal challenge for financial repayments, Mr. Speaker.

The courts have weighed in on certain practices with regards to beverage container, regulations regarding beverage container financing, Mr. Speaker. But this government has said this legislation is going to protect government from any and all future lawsuits and will be retroactive to protect the government against payments that might be legally required.

What's confusing about that, Mr. Speaker, is not so much that the government wants to send the message that what was done during these 12 years was done essentially in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there's no cheques written; there's no new financing that's necessary to pay for court action.

Mr. Speaker, this doesn't happen . . . This is what the public doesn't understand. This doesn't happen in the health care field. This doesn't happen in mining or the oil and gas field, Mr. Speaker. This doesn't happen in other sectors of our economy.

And so, Mr. Speaker, why is this necessary here? That having been said, Mr. Speaker, if indeed it is necessary here and the lawyers on the government side can convince us that it is necessary here, then why is it not going to apply in other areas, particularly areas of environmental protection, Mr. Speaker, whereby there are liabilities incurred on a regular basis? What's to prevent the government from going back in the legislation and put non-court-action retroactivity clauses in anything relating to environmental mitigation, retribution, those sorts of things?

So, Mr. Speaker, a number of things that will require us to continue consulting with the people of Saskatchewan, with some members of the legal profession, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that if this legislation goes forward into committee, that we all have a firm understanding of the types of questions that we need to ask and the types of answers we need to get, to provide confidence that this legislation is indeed allowing the principles and the practice set up in *The Litter Control Act* originally and its evolution over the years.

So, Mr. Speaker, that having been said, I just want the members of the legislature to know that there are some consultations that need to continue with regards to this piece of legislation, and that in order to do that we need to continue to take the time necessary to do those consultations. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that debate on Bill 144, *An Act to amend The Litter Control Act*, be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate on Bill 144, *The Litter Control Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 147

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Draude that **Bill No. 147 — *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to enter into the debate on Bill 147, *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

As we know, the government introduced this particular piece of legislation in the fall, and at the time the minister in her second reading speech indicated that there would be an independent officer of the legislature that would be able to provide public servants access to someone outside of the operations of the day-to-day government in situations where they thought it important that someone be apprised of situations in their workplace that were not appropriate.

As we know, the public in this province relies upon public servants to provide a number of critically important services in our province. We know that there are men and women that

work in various ministries across our province, often responding to emergency situations. We know that they're sometimes in situations where their own occupational health and safety is placed at risk. And we know that these men and women rely upon this Legislative Assembly to protect them as they go about providing the day-to-day services that our citizens have come to expect from government.

Mr. Speaker, I do note that this particular piece of legislation does not apply to health regions or to school divisions in the province or municipalities, even though those three local levels of government receive funding from the province. And so those particular employees that provide important public services are not protected by this legislation, and they will continue to be protected by *The Labour Standards Act*.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is troublesome with this legislation is that this legislation would not have protected an employee in the public service that alerted the public, through the official opposition, that an offender in our correctional institution had been let go early. And as a result of someone informing the opposition, an employee was terminated by the Government of Saskatchewan. With this legislation, we really aren't talking about protection for people who blow the whistle on government.

We also know that there was an occupational health and safety officer who was fighting for better working conditions in our correctional facilities who was terminated by the government. Her case went to arbitration, and she has been . . . The arbitrator ordered this government to reinstate her. And as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, no arrangements have been made for this particular employee to be reinstated.

Now why was she fired? She was fired because she felt it important that people who work at our correctional facilities be protected, their health and safety be protected, as she was the health and safety officer. But the government of the day, the Sask Party government, didn't like what this particular woman was saying. In the ministry they didn't like that she was fighting to better the working conditions for people working at our correctional facilities. And as a result of that, they had her fired and terminated.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that this is a government that has fired an occupational health and safety worker. We know that this is a government that reacted to the opposition's disclosure that an offender was unlawfully at large, that the public had never been notified even though this government assured the public that they would in fact notify the public if the system broke down. And what did they do? They fired an employee in Corrections, Public Safety and Policing who they incorrectly believed was responsible for alerting the public through the opposition.

[16:45]

So we want to put it on the record that this is kind of like a first draft. It sets up some parameters to protect public servants, but it doesn't go far enough. Public servants who want to report wrongdoing in their workplaces definitely need to be protected, but they're not going to be protected by this particular piece of legislation. This Bill does not provide that protection.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the last provincial election the government said that they were going to have a transparent and open government, that they were going to protect the public service who blew the whistle. And in fact the minister in the fall proudly stood up in this Assembly and said that this has been one of the mandates that she's been given by the Premier to introduce this legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, transparency really would be the best possible defence for public servants who report wrongdoing, but with this particular Bill, the government's continuing down the same path that got us to where we are today. And we have two examples of public servants who have been dismissed as a result of them trying to do the right thing.

This Bill ensures that any complaints about wrongdoing in government is internal to government, Mr. Speaker. That is not transparency. If there is wrongdoing in government, we all need to be alerted, Mr. Speaker. It really does, this legislation, it prevents those complaints from being made public.

The title of this Bill is interesting. It's called *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*. And indeed disclosure would be in the public interest, but this Bill does not allow for disclosure. Instead it continues the pattern of this government of keeping things that embarrass the government and keeping those things hidden. And an example would be the carbon capture project. You know, we all know that this carbon capture project disappeared last fall, but the government, the Sask Party government, kept this particular decision of the federal government not to fund carbon capture in the province hidden because they didn't want to be embarrassed. And when you think about the big projects that have been touted by this particular government — I'm thinking of the dome, I'm thinking of clean coal, I'm thinking of carbon capture — they really do have a lot to be accountable for because they raised the expectations of some citizens in the province. And those expectations were certainly dashed.

Now the opposition is concerned that this Bill will only protect whistle-blowers who say the law has been broken, but not those who allege that policy has been broken. And it's important that the public understand that the province not only has legislation and regulations, but they also have policy that guide our behaviour and guide the behaviour of people who work in the public service. And when policy is broken, which I understand it is often, people who are concerned that the policy is not being followed will not have the protection of this legislation when they, quote, blow the whistle.

We also find it interesting that the minister has suggested that the commissioner may be part of the Provincial Ombudsman's office. This is the same government that won't commit to implementing the recommendations of the Provincial Ombudsman. How can public servants, not only public servants in the ministries, have confidence but also people who deliver services in the various Crown sectors, how can they have confidence that an officer working out of the Office of the Ombudsman will have any real teeth?

And we know right now for instance that the Privacy Commissioner, who has a huge backlog, can't get work done because he is dealing with an abundance of people who are wanting access to information, but this government's refusing to provide that information, even though by law they're

supposed to. And he can't investigate the complaints that are coming forward because he doesn't have enough people to provide the investigative processes so that people who have real concerns about access to information in the province can find out what in fact is going on. Now the government says that this is a promise they kept.

I note that the Premier at the Sask Party convention said that it was a debate whether or not the Sask Party had kept their commitment on marriage commissioners. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a whole bunch of people in the province that believe that the Sask Party in the last provincial campaign said that marriage commissioners would be able to, if they did not from their own personal point of view want to marry people of same sex, that they wouldn't have to do that. And there is a whole bunch of people in the community across the province, including people in my own constituency, that were told that by the Sask Party.

And that didn't come to be, Mr. Speaker. And so when the Premier says that's a promise, that it's debatable whether it was kept. There are people in the province of Saskatchewan that genuinely believe that the Sask Party made a commitment, a promise that people who perform marriages in the province would not have to perform same-sex marriages if it went against their personal viewpoint.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, this was a commitment that was apparently made in the Sask Party program document in the last provincial election. Now we note that the original platform document referred to a public integrity commissioner. I guess that when a government creates a post like this after three years of firing public servants, of which we know not only have public servants been fired because the government didn't like what they were doing, i.e., the woman that worked for the Ministry of Labour because she was trying to defend occupational health and safety in our correctional centres. So she was fired because someone didn't like what she was doing.

And then we had a witch hunt trying to find the person that worked in Corrections who provided information to the public that an offender had been released, even though the government said that if that happened they were going to notify the public, and they didn't do that. And so they went on a witch hunt and they fired someone who, Mr. Speaker, I note wasn't the person that originally alerted the opposition.

So I guess when a government creates a post like this after three years of firing public servants who don't agree with them, public integrity really isn't the goal anymore. It's the appearance of keeping a promise that matters, not whether you've actually done any good for anybody, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, we will see, we will see whether in fact this legislation does what it says it's supposed to do.

Mr. Speaker, I note that they're going to find someone who makes a false accusation. Well, you know, a lot of work can be done to ensure that someone who thought they were making an accusation that was correct is indeed a misleading statement. So, Mr. Speaker, that will be interesting to see how they try and deal with this one.

Mr. Speaker, what is most troublesome about this legislation is

that we will never know for sure the contents of the wrongdoing that took place in the public service. We will never know that. It's going to be given to us in some sort of big bundle.

We know each ministry has to report when there has been theft. We know that. And it is reported by ministry. We know how much the alleged . . . how much was apparently taken. We know about fraud in Crown corporations and in various ministries. But we're not going to know about wrongdoing in the public service because that's not going to be provided to us ministry by ministry by ministry. They're going to have a report, and I guess we'll get it all bundled up, but we're not going to know the actual numbers and where it took place.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know all about redaction. I have a lovely access to information request where there were over 1,500 pages basically redacted. I've talked about the Privacy Commissioner who can't investigate access to information requests because he doesn't have enough staff.

And so it will be darn interesting to see how this, how this is going to work. Because at the end of the day, it's supposed to be about protecting public servants. It's supposed to be about honouring a pledge, a promise that was made by the Sask Party in the last provincial election. But I'm not so convinced that it is about protecting public servants. And I know it doesn't honour the promise that was made by the Sask Party because they promised that there would be integrity in the legislation, and there isn't integrity with this particular piece of legislation.

Well they say I'm wrong. I guess we will see. We will see how this gets organized. We will see how the information is presented to the legislature. We will see whether this is buried over in the Ombudsman. We will see whether or not there is in fact an independent officer of the legislature. And we will see whether people are punished for bringing forward, bringing forward examples of wrongdoing in the public service.

And we will see whether those people are protected. Because if I look at it so far, we have a woman in the occupational health and safety area of government who was fired because she was trying to do her job. And she has been reinstated by an arbitrator. And as far as I know, she's not back at work, Mr. Speaker. She is not working. And really the person who fired her, the person who fired her for doing her job needs to be accountable. And there needs to be some sort of integrity but there isn't. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I see that we're close to 5. And with that, I would adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 147, *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 149

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 149** — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010* be now read a second

time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to enter into this debate, a very important debate on Bill No. 149, *An Act to amend The Income Tax Act 2000*. And it may also be known as *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010*. I think there's a lot of points in here, and I'm going to be taking some time to talk about this, particularly when we talk about the record of this government in terms of administering its policies and what we've seen over the past three years. And there's been real shortcomings when they've jumped the gun, so to speak, about some of their initiatives without thinking through clearly what the implications are for Saskatchewan citizens.

And Bill 149 is a very good example of why we have a lot of questions for these folks, a lot of questions in committee. But we see now the implications of when you have an administration, a government that is blinded by ideology and wants to open doors wide open but doesn't really think of what the impacts are for the people of Saskatchewan. What are the long-term impacts for a Bill like *The Income Tax Amendment Act*? You know, this Bill here speaks about a five-year tax holiday, a five-year tax holiday for mining corporations, and they meet certain requirements. But we have some concerns.

The Speaker: — It now being past 5 p.m., the Assembly will recess until 7 p.m. this evening.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier of Saskatchewan
President of the Executive Council

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. June Draude
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Education
Provincial Secretary

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. D.F. (Yogi) Huyghebaert
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Tim McMillan
Minister Responsible for Crown
Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for Information
Technology Office
Minister Responsible for Information
Services Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Workers'
Compensation Board

Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education,
Employment and Immigration
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium
Development Partnership

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Government Services