



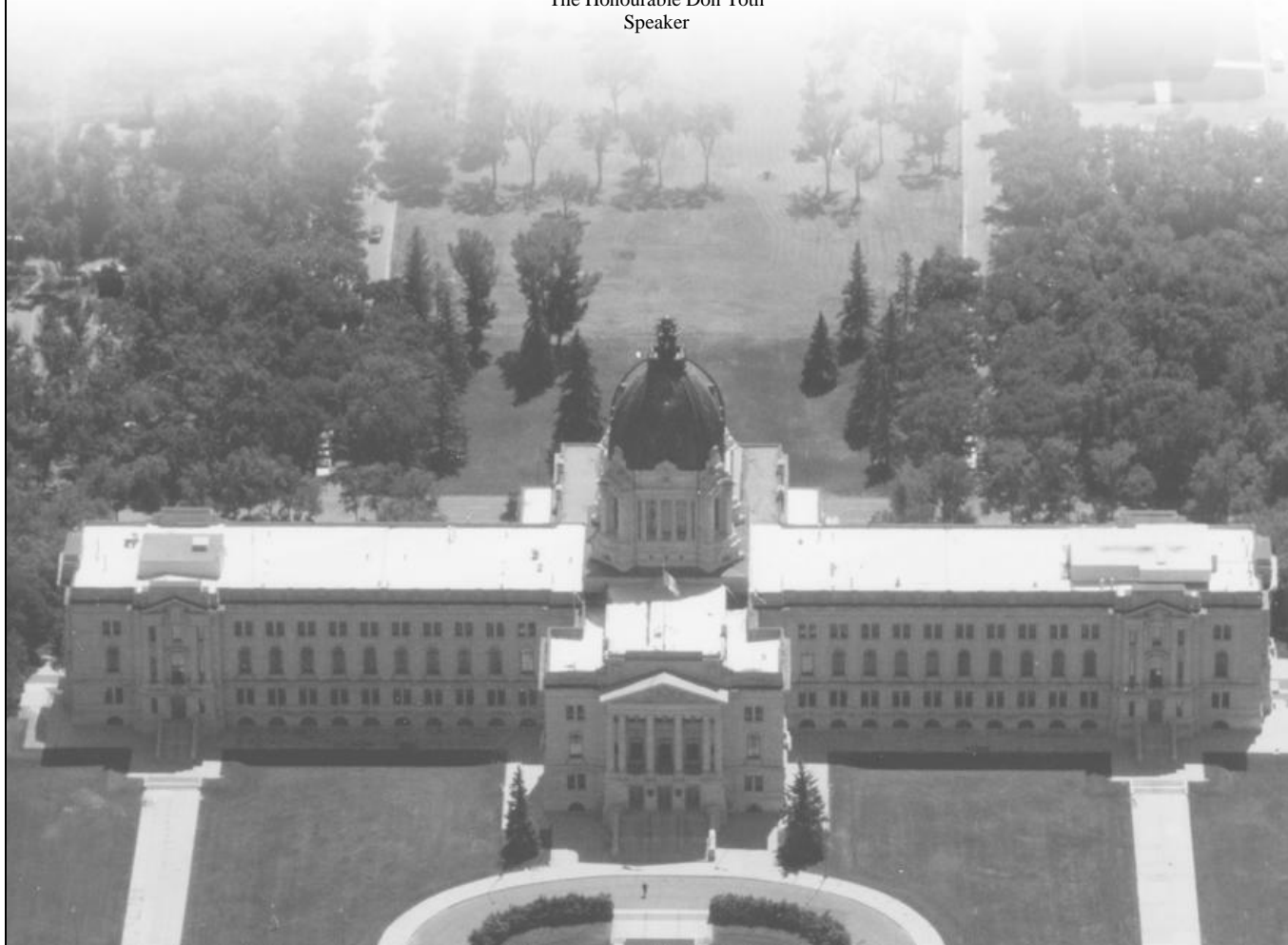
FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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 Deputy Speaker: — Debate will resume on Bill No. 149. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is again a pleasure to resume the debate on this very important topic. You know, we get Bills in the fall and we read about them and we do our research. And we start to think about what does this really mean for the province of Saskatchewan, does it mean for the people for Saskatchewan, of course. We come back with a lot of questions that need to be answered.

We are in some very serious times when it comes to mining and industry related to mining, that we need to make sure we're doing it right and that we've thought it all the way through and all the structures are in place, all the scenarios have been thought of, that we know what's going to happen in the best case scenario that's good news for everyone; we know what's going to happen in the worst case scenario. We hope that doesn't happen, but what happens if it does? And also the most likely scenario, and that's the one that the plans are I think quite often laid out for.

And so in this case we are talking about Bill No. 149, *An Act to amend The Income Tax Act, 2000*. And I want to read, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the notes because it is very important that we get it on record. Many of the folks who are watching today at home or wherever they may be don't know, don't have access to all the information we do, and so they may be wondering what's behind this. So I want to take a minute and just quote the explanation behind clause 3, I believe it is, of the Bill. And the explanation, and I quote:

On December 3, 2009, the Government announced (via news release and Ministerial statement by the Minister of Enterprise) a new targeted tax incentive that would provide a five-year [five-year] corporate income tax holiday for corporations that process mineral imported into the province.

It continues, and I quote:

A new section is being created in *The Income Tax Act, 2000* to provide for a five-year corporate income tax holiday for companies that engage in the processing of minerals imported into Saskatchewan from elsewhere in Canada.

To be eligible, a corporation must be in the business of mineral processing and must make a minimum capital investment of \$125 million in Saskatchewan. In addition, the corporation must employ a minimum of 75 employees in Saskatchewan and must allocate at least 90 per cent of its taxable income to Saskatchewan for income tax purposes.

So that's relatively straightforward. It's a two-pager of explanations, so what could be wrong with something so short? Well I tell you that really when we have that kind of lack of clarity, we come forward with a lot of questions. We don't know what was the history behind this suggestion, this Bill. Where did it come from? Are there particular industries that are targeted that we're looking for? We don't know the size of businesses. We see minimums that they must have at least 75 employees in Saskatchewan, so we're not sure who are these folks that we're talking about. It seems like a pretty blanket statement. And then you might ask, well how could we be against something so neutral? I mean how could this be wrong?

Well you know, sometimes the best laid plans come awry when we really haven't thought everything out, and so I do worry about this. What kind of thinking was behind this, you know, and especially from this government? And we've seen it in a variety of areas last session. We need to just talk about the wildlife habitat Act — relatively straightforward. Well clearly there were problems with that.

We see this even today with questions in question period around the education funding formula and what's happening with that. Why is it that we have to wait until after the election when it was promised that there would be a formula in place that everybody would know beforehand about what is actually happening to the education funding? And they say it's too complex. It's too complex. You have to wait another year. You have to wait. And we've already waited one year. Why do we have to wait? What is it? What is the problem here?

These folks, when they made these announcements around education property tax . . . Very welcome news, but was it well thought out? Was it well thought out? I have to ask that question. So we have to ask about, where did this come from? And we have some real, real concerns about that because there's some real questions about the skill sets that this government has been demonstrating that would lead one to ask some serious questions. And I hope the public is watching this because clearly when it comes to resources in Saskatchewan, people are keying in now, wondering what's happening with Saskatchewan people. Are they getting their fair share? Have we sold the deal a little too easily? This is really, really an issue, you know.

And I will talk more about this because there's a lot of parallels that we can make with the Potash Corp of Saskatchewan and the royalty structure there. Of course that's royalty and some of the profit taxes, that type of thing. These industries of course, I would assume, would not be paying royalties because they're bringing the resources in from out of the province, so they would be paying royalties out of the province, I assume, just the corporate taxes here in Saskatchewan. So we want to make sure we understand that, you know.

And of course, and I'll refer to this in a few minutes, there's been some interesting writing that's been going on by a lot of folks who've been paying a lot of attention about pledges and what do pledges mean. Pledges of full-time jobs and new investments mean different things to different people. And of course if they're not written down, when we get right into the heart of the business, then that's where problems arise and misinterpretations: and I thought you meant this; and okay, that's good enough for now, we don't want to rock the boat. But we need to make sure we understand everything upfront. And this is quite the thing when we have mining companies looking for tax holidays, and what have they pledged in exchange for these tax holidays? And we want to make sure this government holds them to account for their promises.

And of course we have some real issues about how successful this government has been at holding companies to their commitments. And so we have questions about, where did this piece of legislation come from? Who benefits? What were the origins, and where will the benefits likely go? Will there be new greenfield investments? Is this intended to benefit one or two players? Who asked for it? We have a lot of questions, and of course we will have some time to do that when we get into committee, and we're looking forward to that.

But of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to refer to some of the wording in the Act tonight because we want to make sure that people understand what we were talking about. And I know some of my colleagues on this side have asked some questions about why iron ore at a certain stage is exempt or not allowed and exempt in other circumstances. But I want to read section (5) of section 64.1, the mineral processing tax refund. 64.5 goes on:

On receipt of an application pursuant to subsection (2), the minister may:

if the minister is satisfied that the applicant is an eligible corporation and has complied with this section, grant a refund for the taxation year for which the refund is claimed and each of the next four taxation years equal to the amount of the corporation's refund within the meaning of subsection (6) for each of those taxation years;

And I want to read into the record what subsection (6), just in case actually not only the people at home but some of the members opposite may not have read this as well, and I know sometimes that has happened. And I quote subsection (6):

The amount of a corporation's refund for a taxation year is equal to the amount of tax payable and paid by the corporation pursuant to this Act for the taxation . . . after claiming all deductions and credits to which it is entitled for the taxation year.

So there's no percentages; there's no cap. These folks just get it all back. And we don't know what . . . We talk about minimums of the number of employees that are in the province. It's got to be 75, the 90 per cent in the province. But there's no maximums. There's no . . . What happens if that particular mineral, when it's finished being refined, is really doing well in the marketplace? And we go, well we didn't see that happening.

We didn't see that happening. Maybe we should have had an opportunity to put a cap on this. We have a minimum but we don't have a maximum. Is that good planning, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I have to ask that.

Earlier I talked about the different scenarios: good case, bad case. What happens if they do really well and people in Saskatchewan are saying, we could be getting more for this? We could be getting more for this. We didn't realize that we were giving away all our corporate taxes here for five years, for five years. And there's no end date to this as well. This is not targeted for the next 10 or 20 years. This is open-ended. This goes on. This just goes on.

And so I have some real concerns about this because this is not targeting a certain resource to say we want to develop it because it would compliment what we do here in Saskatchewan. It doesn't seem to fit into that kind of thinking. It doesn't target a specific one, and it doesn't target within a specific time frame to say, okay.

And we've heard this government say about royalties now that they're not going to look at it for the next three or four terms, that they at one point had said for a long time into the future, but at least that's a time limit. Here there's no time limit on this. And so I have some real concerns about this because this really opens up the door, really opens up the door to say, you said we could do this forever. You said we could do this forever.

How many times can they do it? Is it just a one five-year period and then they've got that when they enter into Saskatchewan to start up their new refining facilities, that type of thing? So I have some real concerns about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think this is opening up the gate, and clearly we can see what has happened in some of the other resources in our province within that mining sector.

And I know the debate that's upon us right now fits very well into Bill 149 around royalties because clearly they are a mirror. They're very much parallel to each other because it talks about good management skills. How do you encourage an industry to come to a province? How do you encourage an industry to expand?

So I have a few quotes I would like to share with you and share with the House, share with the people at home because I think in a lot of ways this sheds a lot of light on why we should have some concerns about Bill 149 and why we will have a lot of questions when it comes to the House.

I want to quote Erin Weir. Now some of you may have heard of Erin. Erin is a senior economist at the international trade union convention in Brussels. And he wrote in February 10th, and I quote, "The evidence, however . . . is that Saskatchewan is collecting far too little revenue from potash and could collect substantially more without impeding development."

So here we have a question here: five years tax holiday, tax holiday. They're not paying royalties, so in fact these folks come in and it's wide open, open-ended. Are we going to have the same scenario with these other companies here? And here, I think this is a very important quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He goes on and he says, "Potash prices have tripled since 2004."

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a pleasure to see two individuals seated up in the Assembly here tonight that are friends likely of many members inside this Assembly here today. And I would like to welcome Heather McIntyre and Jennifer Milne Bisson to their Assembly, and I ask all members to join with me in providing them a warm welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 149 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010* (continued)

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. And I'd like to say that we'll welcome the guests as well. But I'd like to continue on with what Mr. Weir has said, and I quote:

Potash prices have tripled since 2004. Incentives that might have seemed reasonable to prompt mine expansions in August 2003 or April 2005 are not needed to justify continuing those expansions today.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he's making a point is times change. And how will we live with times that change here with these, with this kind of Bill before us in Bill 149?

[19:15]

And I go on:

Even if the government continues some or all of its incentives for new production, there are other ways to increase revenue. For example, profit tax rates could be raised on sales up to the 2001-2002 . . . [range].

But there is other ways to get these folks in there, other ways. It should have been much more explicit in terms of caps on how much these folks would be able to keep. What would be a reasonable amount in terms of the profits that they are making and will make in Saskatchewan? So we have some real questions, we have some real questions about this. And of course Mr. Erin Weir goes on, and I quote:

However, Wall's "shareholders" are the citizens of

Saskatchewan. His speech that rejected BHP's takeover bid for PCS seemed to recognize the public interest. Specifically, Wall referred to, "Your revenue, the rent you should be getting for the resource that you own."

So here he is pointing out the hypocrisy over here where you have them sticking up and saying we should be getting our fair share, we should be getting our fair rent. But when it comes to other ones, they have some real questions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to another, another article that I think can share some light on this. And this is one that we're all familiar with, and this would be Mr. Murray Mandryk who wrote in the *Leader Post*, "A fair return for potash the most important pledge." Well what Mr. Mandryk says, and I quote:

But while we should be grateful for the generosity and renewed commitment to good corporate citizenry PotashCorp displayed on Monday, we shouldn't be distracted from the fact that what PotashCorp really owes the people of Saskatchewan is fair value for the right to mine our potash resources.

Now that's talking about the royalties, but again we could be making the case for taxes paid in Saskatchewan, especially when you come to a five-year tax holiday. Here he's talking about, we'll probably see corporations who are very generous. And I do want to say that it's great when corporations do their bit and show good corporate citizenry. But one part that they should be making sure they do is pay their taxes.

And so when you have an open-ended Bill like this, I do have some real questions about this. Because I see, are we going down this road yet again? We have an open-ended Bill that really doesn't take into account all the different scenarios that might happen, that might happen. We all hope for the very best. We all hope for the very best. But what happens if things either go really well or really badly, and you have some issues here and you really didn't mean for all those things to happen? So we have some real concerns.

And Mr. Mandryk goes on, and I quote:

But contrast that with what national business leaders like money expert Stephen Jarislowsky of Jarislowsky Fraser are saying. During the PotashCorp takeover he questioned not only the profitability of resource companies, but also why resource company and other corporate executives feel entitled to massive salaries and share benefits. It's reassuring that some business leaders do "get it" in the wake of the 2008 corporate bailouts.

So here we have a situation that we may be allowing corporations — and of course again we don't know who these corporations are — to really have some fantastic wages and salaries and benefits. And people in Saskatchewan are wondering, are we getting our fair share of our corporate taxes these people should be paying? Do we know? Do we know? Well I tell you, by the information we've received, no, we don't know. We absolutely don't know.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go on to another letter that

came out in the *Leader-Post*. And this one was February 15, 2011, and the headline is “Fair return for Saskatchewan potash?” And this is written by John R. McClement. And John writes, and I quote:

However if one pays attention to what is going on in today’s global market place, the royalty structure is broken, out of touch with today’s reality. PotashCorp CEO Bill Doyle observed that the potash industry in Saskatchewan has a bright future, a future that’s driven by increased demand and higher prices, not as he suggests, by the tax structure put in place by the NDP.

He goes on, and I quote:

With dwindling food stocks driving up the demand for the potash needed to help maximize production from the world’s dwindling arable lands, Saskatchewan need no longer set royalties with the misguided notion that royalty rates determine the level of mining in the province. The marketplace has and will continue to set the price and demand for potash.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this sounds like a free market person who’s talking about the marketplace will set the action, the growth of the industry. So here we have the Sask Party over here willing to get involved in a very sloppy way. I’ve got to tell you, as I’ve alluded to many times, some very open-ended questions here, some loose ends that we don’t know where they’re going to go. And we’re going to have the same kind of questions being asked around what’s happened with potash.

We don’t know how big these companies are. We know the minimum. We know there’s at least 75 employees and they’ve got to invest 125 million in Saskatchewan. Those are the floors of the numbers, but we don’t know how big it will be. But we do know they’re going to get at least a five-year tax holiday. And maybe they get a year off and then they come back and get another five-year tax holiday. And they pay one year out of 11 years. Who knows? Those are questions that we need to know.

Hey the government sort of smiles at that but, you know, it’s not spelled out here very carefully. And they need to have some answers — that’s a one time only. I didn’t see that in the notes.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to just read from an editorial, Tuesday, February 15th, the day after that Valentine’s Day event up in Saskatoon. And I thought this was very interesting: *The StarPhoenix* opinion that day, “Royalty regime needs revisiting despite pledges.” And I quote, “With apologies to Robert Service, ‘there are strange things done in Saskatchewan by the men who moil for potash.’”

And he goes on to say:

And since Mr. Service’s poem is, at its essence, a cautionary tale about the dangers in making promises under stress, the cross-promises set out at Monday’s chamber luncheon are worth noting.

So here you have a situation where promises have been made. We don’t know who the promises have been made to. We don’t know who are the players here. We have no idea how big these

companies are. All we know is they get a five-year tax holiday. And I have some real concerns, you know. I have some real concerns.

Now it goes on, and I quote:

To its credit, the PotashCorp has been one of the most significant private benefactors to the charitable sector in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan. The abundant use of its name across athletic fields and facilities at the University of Saskatchewan is a testament to that.

And that’s for sure. But, and I continue my quote:

After all, as Mr. Service wrote, “Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and the trail has its own stern code.”

Yes, well:

This is particularly the case considering the state of industry. Not only have PotashCorp shares since soared well above what BHP was offering in its takeover attempt, but 2010 was the second most profitable in PCS’s history.

Profits are very good. It continues to go on:

For one thing [and I quote, for one thing] this may very well be a debt that Mr. Wall might not be able to cover, since the tax regime always lies within the purview of the government in power. While the premier can commit to keep the tax at any level he wants, politics may have something else to say about it.

And it goes on:

And there is evidence that Mr. Wall’s commitment may be better for the potash company than for his own constituents. While it is important to assure a predictable tax regime remains in place, it’s even more important that the taxes are fair to the people who own the resource.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just underlines the case, that taxes are fair — now in this case where the people own the resource, but for all the people in this province. Here we’ve been talking about a five-year tax holiday. Who gets a five-year tax holiday? I haven’t got one. Many of my constituents won’t get one. And this is really an issue. Now they may think this is a little light; this is not a big deal. What’s a five-year tax holiday? But this is really, really a problem.

And I would like to continue with how it ends. And I quote, “One appreciates the commitment by the PotashCorp, but Mr. Wall’s promise makes one wonder whether we aren’t being bought cheaply with our own money.”

So I have to ask over there, are we being bought cheaply by our own money? Are we being bought cheaply by our own money? I think this is really an issue.

And I’ll end it with a very last line because I think it’s very good, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Again, with apologies to Mr. Service, Saskatchewan

could be left “With a corpse half hid that it couldn’t get rid, because of a promise given.”

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a real, this is a real issue here. And we have a Bill that’s promising a tax holiday for five years. Now of course there will be, there will be some benefits, some benefits. We’re not arguing that there won’t be any benefits. But we are saying, is it fair and is it balanced?

Here this Bill does not have a cap on how much the company will save in corporate taxes. It’s a holiday. They don’t pay any. It sounds like from this they won’t pay any. And if this government can live with that, I have some questions because I know, I know there’s lots of things we could be spending with resources, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province we see poverty increasing. We see housing issues that need to be resolved. This government just recently announced some \$34 million in a housing initiative — very few details in their press release. They talked about it going to 100 communities. We don’t know how much each community will get. But we see next door in Alberta with a housing strategy, a complete comprehensive housing strategy, they’re putting money in there. This government is refusing to do that. They’ve gone on a pre-election spending spree. There is no sustainability to it and this, this really underlines that kind of thinking, that kind of thinking. We’re wondering how sustainable can this be here in Saskatchewan.

And so as I come to the end of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as again I say I have some real, real questions. And I know many people before me have spoken on this issue, and I think there is some real concerns that we have. We have some real concerns because as people across this province become more aware of our resources that we have in Saskatchewan and our right to have a fair return on those resources, both in terms of taxes and in terms of royalties, people are making sure that we do get our share, our share. It’s only reasonable. And nobody’s arguing or shouldn’t be arguing, no, you folks, you can’t get your fair share. We want to make sure that we bring in corporations at any cost. And I think that’s dangerous when we say at any cost.

The background here is very thin, very thin. We don’t know who we’re targeting. Who are the corporations we’re trying to entice, trying to bring in here. And I think that would be only incumbent on the government to come forth with that and say, this is what we’re trying to do. This is the kind of industry we’re trying to develop, and we have a 10-year plan, we have a 10-year plan to do it. Here there’s no, there is no end in sight.

And so I have some real issues with Bill No. 149. And of course we are looking forward to seeing in committee but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move now to adjourn debate on Bill 149.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 149, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 150

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 150 — *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure this evening to join in on the discussion in adjourned debates with a focus on Bill No. 150, *An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act*.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is not overly long compared to some other pieces of legislation that are considered by the Assembly here. But as you know and as listeners at home know, every piece of legislation requires scrutiny. Because when you look below the surface, when you look at the details of any piece of legislation and what some of the implications are, one can often be surprised about what can be revealed about the intention behind a piece of legislation and some of the potential problems that may exist with a proposed piece of legislation even if it does not appear to be overly extensive.

[19:30]

And I think, Mr. Speaker, in looking at Bill No. 150, it’s one example where we see a bit of a mix with respect to bits of the legislation that deal with housekeeping measures and other ones that have more serious implications with respect to the transparency that operates within the Legislative Assembly — transparency with respect to spending for employees or contractors and transparency for the public to have an understanding of where their tax dollars are going.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill No. 150 addresses issues that can be grouped into three different aspects. The first one, Mr. Speaker, as the minister said in his second reading speech, addresses the calculation of the surviving spouse’s pension after the member has retired. So, Mr. Speaker, basically a piece of legislation that proposes greater clarification with respect to how the pension that one is entitled to is handled when an individual passes away, and there’s a surviving member who was married to or attached to the person who passed away, and how that is calculated, Mr. Speaker.

So for this type of thing it is of course fitting that the Assembly introduces legislation that can assist with that process and provide greater clarity. Certainly when an individual passes away, and finances and dealing with estates and that sort of thing are inevitably involved when someone passes away, whatever role this province can have in dealing with the benefits that someone is entitled to and ensuring that that is done in a clear and transparent and smooth manner, I think, Mr. Speaker, that’s in the benefit of all people. And it’s something that the government should endeavour to facilitate and encourage.

So on that aspect of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, if it is simply to improve that process, provide greater clarity to that process, a process that will benefit a surviving partner when someone has passed away, Mr. Speaker, I think many members and people in the public would agree that that's an appropriate and a smart thing to do.

The second part of Bill 150, Mr. Speaker, as described by the minister in his second reading remarks, is section 48.1. And it's described as a housekeeping change that'll make the Act comply with the *Income Tax Act* of Canada. So in this aspect of the legislation, obviously an understanding that there are implications for what occurs on the provincial level with respect to taxation at the federal level, and that certain housekeeping changes need to occur in order to ensure that a matter is dealt with properly and that there aren't problems from a consistency perspective between the two jurisdictions.

Again, Mr. Speaker, as is the case with many types of legislation that can be characterized as housekeeping, if the proposed changes are in fact simply about housekeeping and about modernizing legislation to ensure that it complies with other aspects of legislation or meets the needs of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, I think that is part of the routine business of the Legislative Assembly in ensuring that the legislation in the province is up to date and consistent with other types of legislation.

So from my perspective, Mr. Speaker, that seems like a decent approach to pursue. And I know officials in the Ministry of Justice certainly review legislation on an ongoing basis, identify where housekeeping matters need to take place, and it's brought forward in that manner. And that's appropriate to do so if in fact it is simply housekeeping, and I will place that caveat on the statement.

And I place that caveat on the statement, Mr. Speaker, because what we have seen often from members opposite is an attempt to make changes, describe them as housekeeping, but then not be fully open with respect to some of the more broad implications that a potential change may in fact have.

And the third aspect, Mr. Speaker, where I do see some concerns and some problems and perhaps an effort by members opposite to not be fully transparent with respect to what the game plan is and what the intent is for a certain piece of legislation, that is the third aspect to Bill 150. And, in the minister's words on the second reading speech, it stated, "Three, the third amendment to section 69 will eliminate the need to include personal information in the pension plan annual reports."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand when that bit of information is included with two other measures that seem largely about housekeeping or improving an existing process. I think the third aspect though, Mr. Speaker, cannot be categorized in the same as the first two measures. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, because I think there are more serious implications with this change. And, Mr. Speaker, it has to do with the implications around transparency, about being upfront with the people of Saskatchewan, and about being open and accountable to the Saskatchewan people with respect to the spending decisions that are made by the government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, members will know and many people at home will know, Mr. Speaker, that when it's required that for expenditures going to an individual or a corporation that is providing a service to the province of Saskatchewan, when an individual makes more than \$50,000 a year, that information is publicly disclosed in public accounts. And that's done, Mr. Speaker, to ensure transparency and accountability.

It's done so that members of the public are able to receive the documents associated with public accounts, they are able to go through the documents, and they are able to see who is providing the service, who is doing work, and how much that individual is getting paid if it's over \$50,000, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that's an appropriate thing because when making decisions about contracts or about decisions that occur in a local situation in a given area or in a given sector or field, in order to ensure transparency and in order to ensure that everything remains above board with respect to the selection of individuals, it's necessary for the public to know who is receiving funding. Because after all, Mr. Speaker, it is their resources and it is their province so the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know who, in fact, cheques are going to in exchange for services given.

And that is an appropriate thing, and it's a basic principle of the public accounts process. And it's something, Mr. Speaker, that separates a democracy from a process that . . . from a country or a situation or a local environment that does not follow democratic protocol, that is not open, that is not transparent, that does not ensure that the public's interest is first and foremost when making decisions.

Now my concern, Mr. Speaker, is that with the proposed changes in section three, it eliminates the need to disclose that sort of information for individuals who are retired and receiving a pension. Now for many individuals if they are retired, they are in fact retired, and that is they're on the golf course or they're spending time with family and grandchildren or they're pursuing a hobby or they've done maybe perhaps a complete shift in change in career goals and doing something completely different. That's what many retirees choose to do. And that's certainly an appropriate thing to do for those who are retired. They're entitled to do so, and it's understandable if individuals want to work or pursue interests in a completely different area.

We do know, Mr. Speaker, from time to time individuals who are retired want to use the skills and the experience that they've gained throughout the course of their careers. They may not want to work in the exact same venue or they may not want to work with the same structure or they might not want to do all of the job that they once did, but they may want to stay engaged. They may want to pursue employment and receive contracts of some nature. And so, Mr. Speaker, that's the case in many sectors and that is also the case in the public sector. There are individuals who have served the province very faithfully and honestly and diligently for many years, and when they hit the point where it's in their interest that they may want to retire and try something else, that's the case with civil servants.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if that civil servant who has experience is retired, receiving a pension, and has experience and wants to pursue a contract or an employment that is within the public

sector, that's when it becomes an interesting question, Mr. Speaker, with respect to policy, with respect to transparency, with respect to being upfront and open with the Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why the third aspect of this proposed legislation, where the amount paid to individuals would no longer have to be disclosed, that's where there is in my opinion a problem and a need for increased transparency in order to ensure, in order to ensure that the public's interest is being promoted, is being defended, and is in fact being advanced. I think that is something that all Saskatchewan people would agree with.

And the interesting bit, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to other issues that have been going on in the province and actions that have been done by members opposite in their role as government, really this issue gains even more relevance and importance when looking at decisions members opposite have made about reducing the staffing levels within the civil service. There has been a very clear and open plan by members opposite to reduce the size of the civil service — I think commonly referred to as a four by four — where there is a stated intent by members opposite to reduce the civil service by 4 per cent in each year over four years. That's where the four by four comes from.

Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are entitled to make such a decision because they're the government. And if that's a decision that they want to make, then they're entitled to do so. They're entitled to . . . They ought to let people know about that decision and be very open and transparent about that decision.

Now the catch is, Mr. Speaker, while it may be a political aim and a political goal to reduce the size of the civil service, we do know that civil servants provide a very, very important role on a daily basis in providing services to Saskatchewan people whether that . . . in whatever ministry they are operating in, Mr. Speaker. We know that civil servants, especially in Saskatchewan, have a very sound reputation for providing high-quality services to Saskatchewan people and services that Saskatchewan people appreciate. That's an important thing.

So we know that while members opposite may have a stated intent to reduce the civil service four by four, 4 per cent over each of the four years, we also know, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite will have pressure from the public to continue delivering services to Saskatchewan people because that's what Saskatchewan people expect. There's a high value placed on the public services that are provided to the general public population by our public servants.

So the issue is, there's a stated political goal that members opposite have in shrinking the public service by 4 per cent over four years in each year, but there's also another political pressure, Mr. Speaker, to continue providing the same level of services, if not greater services, to the people of Saskatchewan.

So the problem is those are two competing goals, Mr. Speaker, because yes, while at times perhaps there are some efficiencies that can be gained and there are certain steps that can be taken in order to continue providing services, but at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it requires people to provide the services, to make decisions, give recommendations to ministers, and so on.

And it requires people, it requires civil servants to run a quality civil service. I know that may be a shocker to some members opposite, but the civil servants in the province are in many ways the backbone to the public services that are provided to the people of Saskatchewan throughout the year.

So we can see a situation, when members have a stated goal to shrink the civil service but also have a goal to provide the same level of services or greater services, they're in a bit of a tight spot, Mr. Speaker. And that's where it could be, in certain instances, attractive to engage retirees in employment or in contracts in order to meet the expectations that Saskatchewan people have about services provided by the public service. So increasingly as we see individuals of retiring age taking up their rightful option to retire, we may also see in the province an increased use of these retirees in meeting the needs of the civil service and, in so doing, meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people.

[19:45]

So we could be in a situation where there is an increasing reliance on retired civil servants to be fulfilling the previous role that they served in or perhaps a component of the previous role that they served in or perhaps using the expertise that they have from one area and applying it to a different area. But still the issue that we may see increasingly in the province is retirees who have moved away from the standard job that they had and pursuing different options. And I could see the attraction, Mr. Speaker, of the government when, in order to meet the four-by-four target that they have listed for shrinking the size of the civil service, I could see an increasing reliance on these retirees to provide many of the services that are needed.

Now the issue is, Mr. Speaker, is the transparency around who they are hiring, how much those people are being repaid, and if in fact it is a recent retiree from the civil service who is now providing a very similar service or a portion of the services that they provided as an employee. So what this could get us into, Mr. Speaker, if the government is successful in bringing forward this third aspect of the legislation and not disclosing the amount that retirees receive, it could lead us into the situation, Mr. Speaker, of a shell game where there are individuals who were once employed in the civil service, who were receiving a wage as an employee, they're now working as a contractor or employment through a different means within the civil service, but they are collecting their pension as well as their new source of income based on the work that they are providing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in many circumstances it may make good sense to have a retiree stay on board to help with the transition for a new individual, to provide, to do a job-share relationship as someone else is brought on as experience is gained. In those situations, engaging a retiree to do work in the province may be a smart thing to do. It may be a good transition strategy.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's only a good strategy if it's done in a transparent and open manner. And that requires the public to have the knowledge about what an individual is receiving. Because if that approach of using individuals on a part-time or on a contract basis to provide a service, that is a major aspect of what the public service is going to do on the instruction of the

government. And if that approach is also tied to their goal of reducing the civil service four by four — 4 per cent over each of the four years . . . in each year over four years — then, Mr. Speaker, that's not being open and transparent. Because while individuals may have shifted from one type of employment to another type of employment or contract, they're still working for the province.

But if those numbers are counted in such a way that when the individuals make that transition they are counted as supporting the four-by-four reduction, well I don't think that's being very open and transparent with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because the public is paying twice for these individuals.

And I think for a government that came in and promised open and transparent government in the same way that the Harper administration in Ottawa has done so, Mr. Speaker, for them to take this approach where they want to be able to hide what an individual is earning but still engage them on a contract or part-time basis, I don't think that is an approach that I appreciate. I know it's not an approach that I appreciate. And I know for the many Saskatchewan people who want transparency and openness and straight-up clearness with what decisions are being made and how that is affecting the bottom line in the province, I don't think that's an approach that they also want.

Well members opposite may not appreciate what I just said, and they may not agree with it. And in past pieces of legislation, as has been the case when members opposite haven't agreed with something, they've often just said, well trust me. Trust us, Mr. Speaker, is what members opposite have said. You can trust that we are doing X, and we're accomplishing it this way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think when it comes to being open and transparent, there's a clear record from members opposite, a clear record that they're not exactly happy to be open and transparent in all circumstances. They're not exactly jumping at the opportunity to provide Saskatchewan people with the most current and with the most relevant information.

The example, Mr. Speaker — while I could go through the bits of legislation that we've addressed over the past year or so, and there are many examples — the most recent example that many individuals at home will recall is the failed venture the members opposite have participated in, which is the carbon capture and sequestration project. And members in the Assembly and individuals at home will recall a huge announcement that was made by the Premier with respect to carbon capture and sequestration — how this was a game changer, as an expression the Premier may like to use from time to time, that this was a new era that we were leading on this issue in the world, an example for the rest of the world to follow on this particular issue.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I mean it was a nice photo op for members opposite and garnered some attention for a period of time. But, Mr. Speaker, what did we just find out recently in the last week or so? Well we actually found out that that project is completely dead. All of the hype, all of the glitz, all of the glam that was associated with that project and with the fanfare that surrounded that, Mr. Speaker, it failed. It's over. It's done. And, Mr.

Speaker, it's one thing, it's one thing if the awareness of that flop had just come to the members opposite in knowledge. It'd be one thing . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order, order. The conversations are getting a little loud. I'm having a hard time hearing the member.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. So when the public and the opposition learned of the failed carbon capture and sequestration project, despite the huge, huge deal that was made of it in this Assembly and elsewhere, it would be one thing, Mr. Speaker, if that flop, the failure had just occurred. But what we discovered was it actually had died last fall. It had died months and months ago. And members opposite simply failed to let folks know about it.

Oh, did we forget to tell you about that? I'm sorry. Remember that huge, huge deal we made about a huge, huge accomplishment that we had done? Well it actually didn't happen. And it actually happened many, many months ago — the failure for it to go forward.

So when members opposite take this approach — well please just trust us; we will be open; we will be transparent; we will give you all the information you need when it comes to decisions that the provincial government is making, Mr. Speaker — I'm more than a little reluctant to take members opposite at their word on that issue based alone on the burying that occurred with respect to the failed carbon capture project, despite the hype and the game-changing reality that it was to bring to the province, based on the remarks of members opposite.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I have covered in my remarks this evening, when we deal with a piece of legislation, even when it's a small piece of legislation, even when it's largely described as housekeeping or routine business, there can be very important but hidden aspects to the legislation that have very significant implications for transparency and accountability in the province of Saskatchewan.

And based on the member opposite's assertion that we should simply trust them, that they will be open and transparent, Mr. Speaker, based on that assertion and based on the track record that we've seen from members opposite on that issue, I'm not willing to buy that one, Mr. Speaker. And I think that the people of Saskatchewan deserve more transparency, better transparency, and deserve clear talk when it comes to that issue.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on Bill 150, and I will adjourn debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 150, *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 153

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 153 — *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can we have a little order in the court? *The Provincial Court Amendment Act*, of course Bills 153 and 154, I'll get into those right away, Mr. Speaker, but I believe one of my colleagues has a very important individual he'd like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Vermette: — To ask for leave to introduce a guest.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has asked leave to introduce a guest. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the member from Cumberland.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like all the members to join me in welcoming Gary Tinker. He's with the Gary Tinker Federation. Gary is a northern resident of Pinehouse.

He works hard advocating for people with disabilities in the North. He's done a great job not only for the North, but he's an ambassador. He's done an awesome job, I guess, bringing issues, concerns forward. Gary has worked hard with community leaders, with the government of the day, with the past government. Gary has always advocated for northern people and tried to get a good deal for people with disabilities.

And Gary, I just want to welcome you to your legislature and say thank you for the good work you do. I ask all members to join me in welcoming him to his legislature.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES**SECOND READINGS****Bill No. 153 — *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010*
(continued)**

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I too would like to join those welcoming Mr. Gary Tinker to his Legislative Assembly. It's a long haul down, and he's made that trip a few times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one time during the Walk of Hope coming down decades ago. It's a

pleasure to have you here in the gallery tonight, Mr. Gary Tinker.

So returning to the matter at hand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act*, Bill 153, again it's interesting observing the actions of this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, trying to discern the intent and the origin of certain of their actions, what their motivations are.

This Bill of course it's . . . Any time that, as my colleague from Lakeview has pointed out, any time that you have the legislature dealing with the affairs of the court system as one of the branches of our parliamentary democracy and all the sort of issues around the division of powers that that entails in a free and functioning democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government, be it of whatever stripe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is well advised to tread thoughtfully and carefully.

Of course with this piece of legislation and the subsequent amendments contained in Bill 154, certain of these amendments originate with the Law Society and their input into the Judicial Council and their participation therein. One of them is an administrative matter as pertains to the eligibility for disability benefits. Those matters seem to be fairly clear in their origin, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But my colleague, himself a past minister of Justice and a lawyer and litigator of some repute in this province, very wisely pointed out that the origin of certain of the measures contained in these two pieces of legislation, it's not clear as to who is putting this forward and who is making the case for them at this time. So there are certain things that we're left to suppose about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And chief among those would be the repealing of the civil division of the Provincial Court and the transfer of significant responsibilities that are currently handled by Provincial Court judges to justices of the peace.

Now of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the devil, as with so many things in this, lies with the details. If this is a holus-bolus change, moving to do in the civil division and to take the supplementary role of the justices of the peace and to move them into the main role that is currently played by provincial court judges, many of whom have specific expertise related to cases that arise under the civil division, again on the part of the opposition we see the work that justices of the peace do. We think that they, in many cases, do a fine job.

But I think as the system was originally constructed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were there in a supplementary role. They were there in a role to not exactly stopgap, but certainly the idea was that you have judges for a very good reason and you have justices of the peace for a very good reason. And what we see in this is the possibility to move justices of the peace from that supplementary role and moving them into a main role and taking over duties that were previously handled by provincial court judges.

Now if this is motivated by a desire to expedite matters through the lengthy delays that have arisen in our system, you know, we can certainly have some sympathy for that motivation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we would, on the part of the opposition and I think on the part of thinking people throughout this province, we would want that explained clearly.

[20:00]

And we would also want it explained very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if justices of the peace are to supplant the role of provincial court judges — again provincial court judges, many of whom have specific expertise when it comes to matters of civil law — that would appear by this legislation to be handed over to justices of the peace with the repealing of the civil division. Then again we think that that's something that the government should be more clear about.

One of the things that's also sort of presented as a time-saving measure, but again the origin of this is less than clear as compared to other matters that originate with the Law Society, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the matter of bringing in out-of-province . . . formalizing the procedures whereby if provincial judges need to recuse themselves on certain matters whereby you bring in judges from out-of-province to deal with matters arising. Again, if this is more on an expedited role or a supplementary role, that is one thing. But as this practice becomes formalized, we'll be very interested to see how this government avails itself of this change in legislation and this formalizing or this institutionalizing of what has hitherto been a supplement in the system.

I guess the one thing additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the appointment of judges previously, and fundamentally, administrative matters were handled by the chief judge. We want to hear very clearly from that Minister of Justice what actions initiate with him and with that government across, and what is the division with the chief judge.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I return to the opening, sort of, premise of my remarks tonight. When you have one of the branches of our democratic system dealing with other of the branches, such as the legislative branch dealing with the judicial branch, people should be very clear as to what the motivation is and to know what the arguments are and be able to judge them for themselves. Because these may seem to be fairly arcane or mundane kind of matters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but these are the very underpinnings of this democratic system that we enjoy. These are some of the fundamental building blocks of the rule of law and the division of powers that serves this country very well and this province very well and in point of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which are the kind of democratic structures that we see people protesting for right throughout the Middle East, things that we take for granted.

So again if the government of the day is going to move forward on these, we think they owe it to the people to be very clear on their motivations. But we also think they should tread very, very carefully in terms of what are the changes that they're making to fundamental aspects of the judicial system, and what is to be gained and what is to be lost by moving justices of the peace from a supplemental role into a more mainstream, mainstay role within the system, and what is to be lost by the repealing of the civil division of the Provincial Court.

So I guess those are the fundamental issues that we see on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are some other matters contained in the legislation where it allows for greater public disclosure of the results of investigation into the conduct of judges under the Judicial Council. And again greater public

transparency on the one hand is a good thing, but on the other, we see this as a government that has practiced curtailing accountability and providing less transparency when it comes to things as Orwellian, with your Orwellian title, such as the public interest disclosure post where, in the name of greater public disclosure, they curtail the ability of things to be brought to the light of day.

So again, as we see the government preach one thing on the one hand and practice something else on the other, we'll be vigilant on that. But their record, as it relates to proclaiming transparency and accountability and then practising something very different, we think speaks volumes for itself, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

With that, I guess I would bring my remarks on this piece of legislation to a close, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll have something to say about Bill 154 in short order. But with that, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved adjourned debate on Bill 153, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 154

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 154** — *The Provincial Court Consequential Amendment Act, 2010/Loi de 2010 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again picking up where I left off with Bill 153, the consequential amendments contained in this Act make amendment to *The Small Claims Act*, allowing the government to repeal the civil division of the Provincial Court and transfer significant responsibilities currently handled by Provincial Court judges to justices of the peace.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there may be some merit to doing this on a limited or supplemental basis. But there are some highly serious implications in terms of the expertise that resides within the civil division of the Provincial Court and transferring that over to justices of the peace that in point of fact may not have the same expertise as has been invested in the civil division of the provincial court.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I guess I would reiterate my concerns about what happens when you've got one branch of our democratic system taking steps to alter or curtail the conduct of another of the fundamental branches of our system and the way that impacts the rule of law in this democratic country of ours, Canada, and both in a more qualitative kind of

way that this can impact the conduct of these cases. Again, justices of the peace are a good feature of our system as currently constructed, but there is an expertise in the civil division of that Provincial Court that it hasn't been adequately described, by this Minister of Justice and by this current government, how moving that expertise away from the civil division and turning that over to the justices of the peace, that may expedite some of the matters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but does that provide us with assurance around the quality of the judgments that are being rendered?

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's expertise that has been amassed within that civil division, and we look on this with some concern. And we also look to see what are the origins of this movement and this change. But with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I've said my piece for both of these pieces of legislation, and as such I will move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 154.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 154, *The Provincial Court Consequential Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 155

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 155 — *The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to weigh in on debate and discussion as it relates to Bill No. 155, *The Natural Resources Amendment Act*, here tonight. It relates specifically to matters that are very special and close to my heart, Mr. Speaker, that being the protection of wildlife habitat, the enhancement of that habitat, protection of our wildlife, and the hunting and fishing that's so special to our province, Mr. Speaker.

I'm a big believer that hunters and fishers are strong stewards of the land and through their pursuit of their activity have a very special connection to our natural environment. They recognize and they participate in our beautiful and special ecological diversity across our exceptional province, Mr. Speaker.

When you think of the various regions that sport fishers and hunters partake in in this province, we're truly blessed — bespeckled North of lakes and rivers and Canadian Shield, forest and trees and rock. Just a beautiful region, Mr. Speaker, right across all the many regions, through the parkland, down through the South and in through the valleys and all regions of our Prairies, Mr. Speaker. We have this beautiful diversity that's unique to each of those regions and this wonderful interplay of hunters and fishers who are there for sport but also

there as stewards of the land and recognize their roles in this capacity.

So as I weigh in on Bill 155, certainly it is close to my heart. And when we look at it, at first it seems to appear to be a bit innocuous. However we certainly do have questions about potential implications or unintended consequences of the changes that have been put forward. This specifically relates with the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and in particular the role played by the advisory council.

And it's fair to say that the opposition and that I, as a private member, support the work of that fund and that group of individuals who have advised that spending for many years, Mr. Speaker. They've done some very special work as it relates to both land protection and habitat protection, but also researching best practice, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to habitat and wildlife management and looking at ways to enhance and protect our ecological diversity, Mr. Speaker. And this is important and special work. So we thank them for that work. We commend them for that work.

What we question here, at this point in time, is that we recognize that that fund has through time been funded with 30 per cent of the fees and licences that hunters and anglers pay here in Saskatchewan, and that's furnished those revenues for that fund. Now what we see is a broadening of the scope and the mandate of that fund. We have questions about the sustainability of new revenue sources that are being deliberated by this government to ensure that the projects that are put forward are both sustainable and also as effective as they should be, Mr. Speaker.

And it's, to be frank, Mr. Speaker, it's with the record of this government as it relates to hunters and fishers and the protection of wildlife lands, Mr. Speaker, of habitat, is a poor one. And it's with looking to that record, Mr. Speaker, and to see the outright changes that impact this sector, that we have cause for concern when this government opens up legislation that impacts our beautiful ecological diversity, the important role that hunters and fishers, First Nations play within this province, Mr. Speaker. And so it's with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, that we have caution as we look to this piece of legislation.

It was just last spring, Mr. Speaker, that we saw historic legislation put forward by the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker, that took away protection from 3.5 million acres of land, Mr. Speaker, that had been protected for ecological purposes, that had been protected for purpose of promoting the diversity that exists, that supported the work of hunters and fishers, that respected First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker. And not only did they make sweeping changes in taking away the protection for these lands, Mr. Speaker, putting forward a historic sell-off of these protected lands by the people of this province, they did so unilaterally without consulting the people for whom it affected, Mr. Speaker.

And further to that, which was of great concern, is that they actually told us otherwise. So not only did they not consult, but they actually told us that they had, Mr. Speaker. And when we, of course, came around to doing those consultations ourselves, we recognized that those stakeholders hadn't been consulted,

were not part of the process, and in fact didn't support the legislation.

And those individuals, Mr. Speaker . . . I mean we're talking about the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Mr. Speaker, a proud organization in this province with a rich history, Mr. Speaker, and 30,000 members or thereabouts province-wide that have a significant role to play in this province both now and into the future, but have historically as well. And other organizations that weren't consulted would include Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Speaker, that have the best interests of wildlife protection, enhancement in habitat protection and enhancement at heart, Mr. Speaker, that work hard to fundraise, to achieve further enhancement of these kinds of landscapes only to see that all swept away by sweeping unilateral change of this Sask Party government who lifted the protection of 3.5 million sensitive habitat acres, Mr. Speaker.

[20:15]

And we can go further. Certainly the outfitters weren't consulted, Mr. Speaker. And we can look at the nature groups and environmental societies within Saskatchewan, Nature Conservancy or environmental groups. They weren't consulted, Mr. Speaker. And they know first-hand the importance of us protecting this land and holding it, not only to the care and the stocks and the circumstance that we have now, Mr. Speaker, but also making sure that's enhanced for future generations, Mr. Speaker, for many years into the future to make sure that individuals in Saskatchewan can come to Saskatchewan, live in Saskatchewan, and interplay with this incredible natural landscape, Mr. Speaker, that we have. I believe it's one of the huge advantages to living within Saskatchewan that within just a short drive you can be in such an exceptional natural environment that has wonderful stocks of habitat or well-managed fisheries, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is something that we need to be protecting, not diminishing, not selling off as the Sask Party is. And they should be ashamed of themselves, Mr. Speaker.

And I would speak specifically to First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker, our first people of this province, Mr. Speaker, who have a duty to be consulted with, Mr. Speaker, who weren't consulted with as well in this historic sell-off of these lands that served Saskatchewan people, both for generations before, Mr. Speaker — my great-grandfather and many others — and certainly generations to come, Mr. Speaker, if managed properly.

But sell-offs of land, lack of consultation, and disregard for important environmental and hunting and fishing stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, have consequences for our fisheries, for our wildlife stocks, for our habitat, Mr. Speaker. And I'm disappointed. I'm upset and I'm angered by the disregard, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party has displayed to these vital stakeholders of our natural environment, our ecological diversity that makes us so special. So it's with that lens, Mr. Speaker, that I judge these changes.

And I notice that in the minister, who's now the Minister of Environment, Mr. Speaker, I recognized in his statements that he was highlighting the fact that this fund through its historic role, the Wildlife Development Fund, had protected 212,000

acres of land, Mr. Speaker. And that's significant. And it's worthwhile work, and we commend that work. But at the same time, while the minister is highlighting 212,000 acres as something of an achievement and something that we should be looking to with pride — and I certainly agree on that front — he dismisses the fact that it was he and his government, the Sask Party government, that put up for sale 3.5 million acres of protected habitat lands, Mr. Speaker, lands that were there for the same purposes, there to protect flora and fauna and the wonderful landscape that we have here in this province.

So it's pretty rich, Mr. Speaker, for that minister who has failed Saskatchewan people . . . He became a minister after the first Bill had been enacted, and it should have been his first action as a responsible minister to remedy that, to withdraw that Bill, to repeal that Bill, and to fix that circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

And I know hunters and fishers across Saskatchewan are hugely disappointed with the new Environment minister for not doing so. I know they're hugely disappointed with this Premier and the Sask Party government for not fixing something that is to the detriment of Saskatchewan people, whether you live in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, whether you love simply the outdoors and the beauty of our wildlife and our flora and our fauna, Mr. Speaker, or whether you're a hunter and a fisher, Mr. Speaker, these aspects all interconnect. And when we're talking about environmental degradation and the disrespect of key stakeholders across Saskatchewan who play such a vital role in protecting and enhancing those lands, those wildlife stocks, I have a huge concern.

And of course we've been consulting across Saskatchewan with the Wildlife Federation, with the regional branches, who each of them I know have or many of them have expressed great concern that the new minister wouldn't have made that his first priority, to repeal that Bill. They know that this minister now is going to stick to the guns of the Premier, the Sask Party Premier, on this one, and is going to allow the degradation of these lands, Mr. Speaker, the sell-off of these habitat lands.

But it's a great disappointment, Mr. Speaker, both to myself, to our opposition, but also to these many vital groups across this province. And I know specifically in the minister's own home riding, many from the wildlife branch in his own community of Weyburn are very disappointed by his lack of action to remedy something that is not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

And it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that people of this province have worked incredibly hard. Many people put in a lot of time volunteering, fundraising, building capacity within these organizations, Mr. Speaker, to be able to build the kind of protection that we had in place. And what they'd like to see is us move the line on that, Mr. Speaker, to enhance that, to apply best practice that is relayed to us through research and to invest in that research as well to make sure we're able to move forward as a province that is not only proud of our rich history, of our environmental assets, but that we are in fact enhancing and promoting those as we move forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look to this Bill through that lens, and it's with that background, that context, that I look to this Bill with caution. Questions as far as the scope of the mandate, well what

does this mean? What are the intended consequences of this? We haven't exactly gleaned this yet from the minister. What are the unintended consequences that are as a result of this Bill? We need to make sure we fully understand those aspects.

What about the sustainability, Mr. Speaker, of the very important projects that need to be undertaken, Mr. Speaker, on the environmental front, on the front of protection and enhancement? What certainty do we have with the revenue sources that are attached to this new scope, this new mandate? As I say, Mr. Speaker, there's more questions than answers on this Bill. And this government's record speaks for itself, and it's one of damaging our proud relationship with key stakeholders across Saskatchewan, and one that has put key environmentally protected habitat lands up for sale, Mr. Speaker, up for auction — lands that have been in some cases possibly bequeathed by an estate or through the hard work of local chapters and fundraisers. And the government can laugh, Mr. Speaker, all they want, but it's simply not a laughing matter across this province, Mr. Speaker. Quite the opposite.

We recognize this as potentially another example of a growing propensity of this government to offload responsibilities to another organization other than itself, and with that we question the accountability of this government to the taxpayers' dollar for an intended purpose, Mr. Speaker. And it's important for us to recognize that it's the members of this legislature, myself and all other 58 members, that need to be held responsible for the spending of taxpayers' dollars, and we continue to see this government shirk that responsibility, Mr. Speaker. And we see that certainly to be a detriment to Saskatchewan people as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that we have many more questions, consultations with key stakeholders across this sector, Mr. Speaker, that will continue with the Wildlife Federation, with our outfitters, through Ducks Unlimited and our organizations, the Nature Conservancy, the environmental societies, Mr. Speaker, and First Nations and Métis people of this province, to understand their positions with respect to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure that their voices are heard, Mr. Speaker, and not rejected, dismissed, as they were during the last Bill that was put forward that was so damaging, Mr. Speaker, to wildlife lands, to our environment, and to hunters and fishers, Mr. Speaker, across this province.

So at this point in time tonight I will conclude my remarks and we will continue to embark on those consultations. And at this point in time I will adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 155, *The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has

moved that this House does adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 20:26.]

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