



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

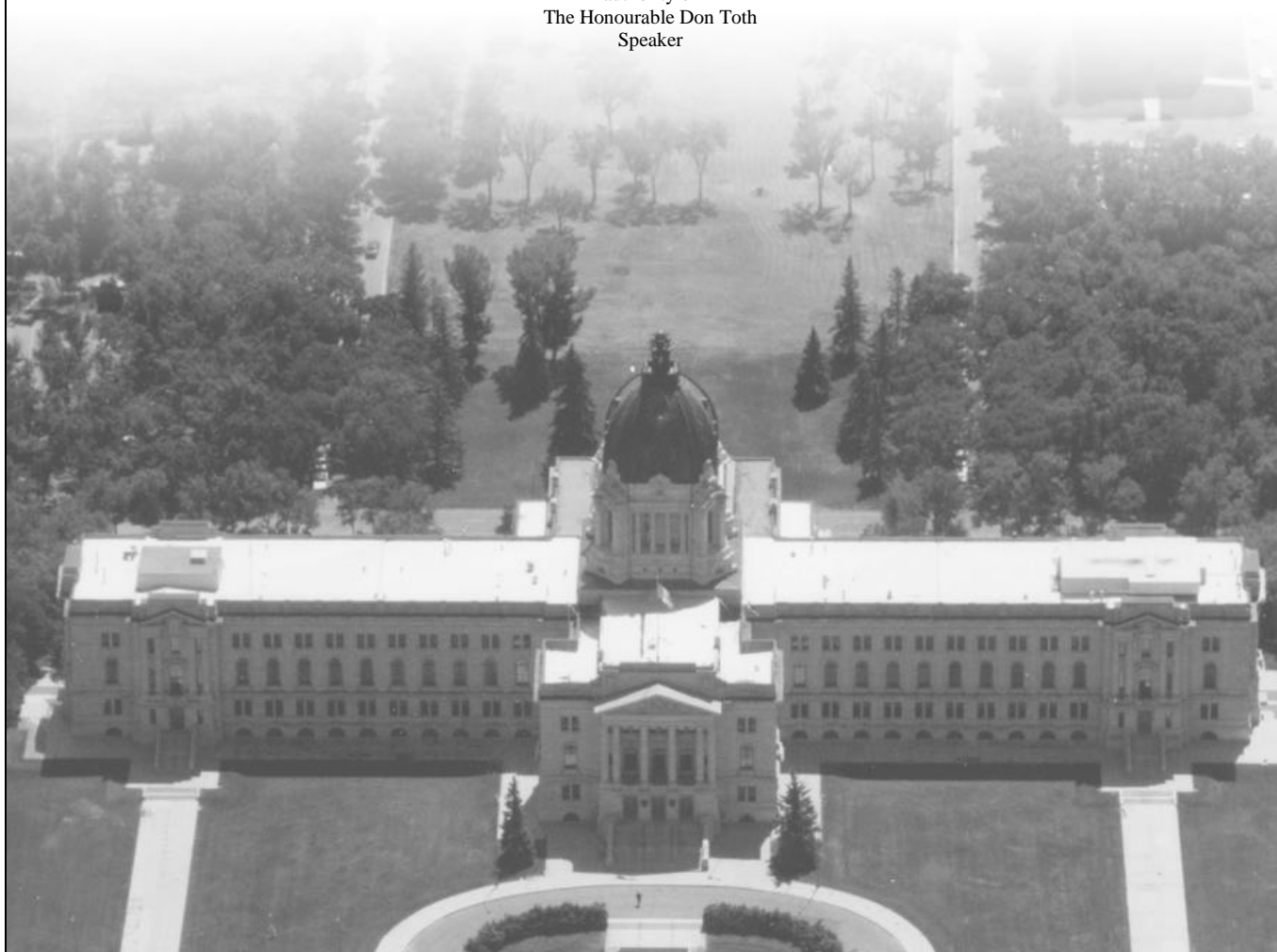
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Gail McArthur Posehn. Gail is seated in your gallery today. Gail is a board member from Family Services Regina. Their organization is hosting a fundraising luncheon tomorrow at Casino Regina. Sask Gaming is one of the event's proud sponsors.

Gail is here today showing an amazing handmade Saskatchewan Roughrider quilt that she has created. The quilt is signed by the entire 2010 team as well as notable alumni like George Reed. It's an incredible piece of work. It'll be highlighted tomorrow at an auction at the casino.

Mr. Speaker, through you to all members of the Assembly, I would encourage people to attend if possible to highlight the good work that Family Services Regina has done, and the important programs and services that they undertake. At this time I'd like to welcome Gail to her Assembly and thank her for her commitment to Regina and the province of Saskatchewan. I'd ask all members to help me welcome her.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce to this Assembly some guests who have taken time from their busy day to come and express through their presence their concerns about the present state of mental health care in Saskatchewan. And joining us in the gallery today is David Nelson. David, could you give us a wave? Is he here? Oh, he's coming. He's the provincial executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association and he's brought along some other members of his organization. And joining us today also are dedicated and caring nurses of the Registered Psychiatric Nurses' Association, including Karl Mack and Mary Kay Renwick. And other psychiatric nurses who are here. Give a wave. Oh, lots. Thank you. And there's also representatives today from the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan up there.

And I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming these dedicated health care workers and the community volunteers who so obviously illustrate their commitment to the cause for effective provisions of mental health care in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming members from the mental health community here to their Legislative Assembly, whether it's the Canadian mental health society, the psychiatric nurses' association or the Schizophrenia Society. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

I've met with many of these organizations over the past three and a half years and some prior to us becoming government. And just publicly, if I don't have another opportunity throughout the day, to thank them for the work that they do for the people that are challenged with mental illness. They do, absolutely do wonderful work and God's work. So thank them on behalf of the government for the work that they do.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to do an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — The Leader of the Opposition has asked for leave to do an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed.

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege and pleasure to introduce Tom Graham, the president of CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] Saskatchewan, who is seated in your gallery. And with him is translator Barbara Wood as well as Cheryl Stadnichuk who is a staff and researcher at CUPE.

But also joining them, a very, very special guest who I want to introduce, Berenice Celeyta who is here with us. And Berenice is the director of an organization called the Association for Social Research and Action. And this is a group that does human rights work in the area in southwestern Colombia, building and defending social alternatives in that part of Colombia.

In more than 20 years as a human rights defender, Ms. Celeyta has worked with indigenous people and Afro-Colombians in communities and in the labour movement. And in the labour movement, she played important roles with national mining unions with investigating human rights abuse and massive displacements related to mining concessions in foreign corporations. She also worked with the Cali public utilities union, fighting against privatization in the public utilities in that community.

In 1988 Ms. Celeyta was recognized for her outstanding work with the prestigious Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award. Sadly she has also been a target of death threats and harassment. In 2001 the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights requested the Colombian government provide precautionary measures on her behalf, but she continues to receive threats on her life and to her safety.

Ms. Celeyta's in Regina as a guest of the Canadian Union of

Public Employees Saskatchewan, which is holding their annual convention this week. Ms. Celeyta has already visited the University of Regina to address students, as well as CUPE Saskatchewan in the Aboriginal conference there where she spoke on the rights of indigenous people around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all members will want to welcome our special guests here to the Assembly today.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice, the member responsible for Labour.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Opposition Leader in welcoming these individuals to the House. Mr. Graham and Ms. Wood and Ms. Stadnichuk are no strangers to Saskatchewan and to this House. So we welcome them here, and we thank them for their continued good work in this particular endeavour. This is something that's significantly above and beyond the work that would ordinarily be undertaken in the labour movement, so we thank them for their extended and expanded role that they are taking.

With regard to Ms. Celeyta, we would like to welcome her to the province and commend her for her continuing good work. The work that she is undertaking, when you put your own life at risk for others, is something that is not something that should go unrecognized by all members of the House. And I think that all members would support any work that promotes human rights, promotes safety and security of individuals in the workplace and elsewhere. So we thank her, and we thank the individuals that she's come with for their work and urge them to continue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Assembly, a young woman sitting in your gallery who is very dedicated to the sport of figure skating. Now this young woman, Hannah Lingenfelter, was in Moose Jaw last weekend and had a very good performance at the 2011 SaskTel Jean Norman Open Free Skate and Dance Competition that was held in my community of Moose Jaw. Hannah won gold in the free skate and gold in the elements.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's pretty impressive, and it's always interesting to see young people that are very dedicated to the sports they're involved in. And I know she's committed; she spends many hours even throughout the summer practising her craft and it's beginning to pay off very well for her.

Hannah's here with her mother, Rubiela, and I'd like all members to welcome both of them here to the legislature.

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce Mr. Peter Adsten who's here from Saskatoon today. Many will know that he was the founder or one of the founders, one of the partners of Crestline ambulances and made a

significant contribution to our province and certainly well beyond our province regarding medical care for people. Mr. Speaker, we're delighted to be able to welcome him to his Assembly today. I ask all members to help me in welcoming Mr. Adsten to his Assembly.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for more protection for renters from unreasonable rent increases. And we know that renters here in Saskatchewan are seeing their rents increase by several hundred dollars per month, with the average rent increases, even in smaller communities like Estevan, being more than \$200 year over year. And we know that the majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines including Manitoba, BC [British Columbia], Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island. I would 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 of protecting Saskatchewan renters from unreasonable increases in rent.

I do so present.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

**Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan concerned about Bill 160, human rights law, which will effectively change in significant ways the human rights law of the province of Saskatchewan and without public consultation. And the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan withdraw Bill 160 from consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and hold extensive public consultations, informed by a public policy paper, before any amendments to the Human Rights Code, the law that supersedes all others in our province, are even considered.

And the petition today is signed by residents of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

**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 specifically to the two consecutive deficit budgets, the two years of debt growth, all despite high levels — in fact record levels — of revenues, Mr. Speaker, this year growing our debt by \$400 million in a single budget year, Mr. Speaker, of course coming at a consequence to Saskatchewan people and organizations. 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 residents of Estevan. I so submit.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### International Women's Day

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day is celebrated annually on March 8th. In 2011 we pay tribute to 100 years of celebrating women's achievements around the world through observing and hosting International Women's Day events in our communities.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we know that Saskatchewan women are facing more pressures to make ends meet and take care of their

family and their loved ones. Rents are now unaffordable in our province. Food bank usage is up 20 per cent over just last year to a disheartening 23,000 people relying on the food bank for help. Unemployment is also up from last year, with 27,000 families struggling with the worry of how to pay their bills.

Planned changes by the Wall government to shut down the Human Rights Tribunal will also impact . . .

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

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. I would ask the members to refer to individuals of the Assembly by their proper title.

[13:45]

**Ms. Morin:** — Planned changes by the Sask Party government to shut down the Human Rights Tribunal will also impact Saskatchewan women, forcing more gender-based complaints to be heard in court with the cost of hired lawyers.

New Democrats believe we can do more as a province for our women. Helping with make rent affordable, more money for child care, and shelving ill-conceived plans to shut down the Human Rights Tribunal would be a positive move forward for Saskatchewan women. Let's acknowledge 100 years of celebrating women's achievements by adding more to the list.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join with the New Democrats in marking 100 years of International Women's Day events and join us on making positive changes to improve the lives of Saskatchewan women. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, each year on March the 8th, women and men in Saskatchewan join with the global community to celebrate International Women's Day. This special day is a time to reflect on the progress made to advance women's equality and to celebrate the economic, political, and social gains made for all society. These include protection language in labour standards, rights to maternity leave, increased participation in the labour force, and expansion of educational opportunities.

This special day has been observed since 1911 and was officially proclaimed by the United Nations in 1975. In Saskatchewan the theme in 2011 is A Celebration of 100 Years of International Women's Day. Across the province, events are being organized to honour women past and present and to inspire a future generation of women and girls to achieve their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Status of Women office in the Ministry of Social Services, through an International Women's Day grant program, is assisting 97 community-based women's organizations that will host 38 events throughout the month of March. I encourage my colleagues to take the time to attend activities in their own communities. Details of these events are listed on the Ministry of Social Services website.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House and the people of this province join me in paying tribute to many women who have contributed to making Saskatchewan such a wonderful place to live and work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Rural Women's Month

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As people around the world observe International Women's Day, I rise to acknowledge Rural Women's Month here in Saskatchewan, a time to be reminded and honour rural women of this province who have helped shape Saskatchewan into the strong, caring society that it is today.

Rural women have positive ideas about the changes needed to improve the well-being of not only themselves but their communities, Mr. Speaker. Yet in recent years, demographic shifts, funding cuts to women's organizations, and the triple workload that farm and rural women carry have made it more difficult for rural women and their organizations to remain active and present their views which, Mr. Speaker, is a loss for us all. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud the New Democratic Party has been working hard to recruit today's generation of strong rural women to make sure that those voices are heard here in this legislature.

Jeanette Wiciski-Dunn is a volunteer, business owner, and former town councillor who will bring her formidable business and leadership organizational skills to her new role as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Saskatchewan Rivers. Bernadette Gopher is the NDP [New Democratic Party] candidate for Rosthern-Shellbrook, a business owner and operator and a member of the Saulteaux First Nation. Janice Bernier is the candidate in Batoche, is an organizer, activist, and community volunteer that is closely involved with the family farm south of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, these women have already proven that rural women can be a strong voice for positive change, and very soon their voices will be heard here in the legislature.

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

### Tribute to the Red Cross

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be possible in times of peace and quiet to form relief societies for the purposes of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted, and thoroughly qualified volunteers? This is the question asked by Henry Dunant, Swiss founder of the Red Cross, after witnessing suffering on an Italian battlefield in 1859.

The Red Cross makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class, or political opinions. They endeavour to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Mr. Speaker, disasters can strike any time and anywhere and those in need cannot wait. Canadian Red Cross helps vulnerable

communities in Canada and around the world affected by emergencies and disasters, situations ranging from individual house fires to floods and earthquakes that disrupt entire regions. Following a disaster, Red Cross workers provide vital assistance for people's basic needs, including shelter, family reunification, and first aid, along with clothing and food. It is because of the tireless efforts of their volunteers that the suffering of distressed people worldwide has been eased.

Mr. Speaker, they played a tremendous role in the floods this past summer throughout the province, including Yorkton. And I ask this Assembly to thank and recognize the tremendous efforts of the Canadian Red Cross Society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### International Women's Day

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, on this the 100th International Women's Day, we recognize how far women have come over the last century, but we also recognize how far we still have yet to travel on the road to true equality. Women in the workforce face special challenges, Mr. Speaker.

Here in Saskatchewan, statistics show that the average hourly rate for women in 2010 was 85 per cent of that for men. Yes, Mr. Speaker, still, after 100 years of International Women's Days, for every 100 cents a man earns, a woman earns just 85 cents, and many say it's going down rather than up.

And inequality isn't limited to those earning hourly wages. Mr. Speaker, it goes all the way up to the glass ceiling, and in today's paper it's referred now to as the steel ceiling, and a ceiling that keeps women underrepresented at the leadership level as well. A survey released today of 290 Canadian organizations found that 82 per cent had no clear strategy for encouraging women to enter leadership positions. The trend to present here in Saskatchewan too, from 2005 to 2010, men's share of managers' jobs increased by nearly 15 per cent, women just by 12. If the increase had been equal, Mr. Speaker, there would be over 400 more Saskatchewan women working in leadership positions than there are here today.

And the challenges don't end with the workday, Mr. Speaker. A University of Toronto study finds that women who regularly deal with work calls on their personal time experience greater stress than men — a difference that's likely rooted in stereotyped expectations about men's and women's roles in work and home.

Mr. Speaker, despite all of these challenges, women continue to make gains in the struggle for equality in the workplace and beyond, but the numbers remind us there is still much work for all of us to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

### Rural Women's Month

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recognition of the

significant contributions to this great province, our government has proclaimed March Rural Women's Month. This month we celebrate the past and present contributions of Saskatchewan's rural women.

Throughout our history, rural women have played a valuable role in their family farms, local communities, and the growth of our province and the agriculture industry. The contributions of strong rural women can be seen, whether through working the land, educating youth, tending the sick and elderly, or providing commercial services. Rural women are also vital volunteers to the communities, be it refereeing, working groups for hockey and ball tournaments, working bingos for fundraising, or being 4-H club leaders.

Saskatchewan has prospered, and the rural women in this province have and continue to play a pivotal role in our province's success. As Saskatchewan continues to take its place as a leader in the new West, our rural areas will continue to add to the overall strength and vitality of our province.

I would ask that this Assembly recognize the hard work and leadership of rural women in Saskatchewan. The women of our province have been and will continue to be critical to the progress of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Mental Health Concerns in Northern Saskatchewan**

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Chamber today to raise awareness for mental health in Saskatchewan, specifically the mental health of our northern peoples and the terrible consequences of not responding to these challenges, and that is the suicide rates within some of our northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, it weighs heavy on the heart to know that so many of our young people are in such a desperate hour in their lives that they would choose to hurt themselves. There are so many opportunities for young people if only they could be shown the path to happiness and success. Canadian stats show that First Nations people take their own lives at twice the national average.

There is hope in the Aboriginal experience in Canada though, as more First Nations and Métis students are graduating from post-secondary school than ever before. And many band councils and Métis communities view economic development as one solution to the problems plaguing many of our northern communities.

The Sask Party government need to respond to this issue. If life as a northern Saskatchewan resident is so rosy, then why are children killing themselves in droves? There are several deficiencies in service — severe deficiencies in service — front-line workers who are overworked and understaffed. The schools are trying, the parents hoping, but we need to respond.

Mr. Speaker, we all need to think long and hard about this tragic epidemic which is destroying not only some isolated northern communities but also urban and other rural communities within Saskatchewan. Mental health issues are

important and should always be treated with the utmost respect and seriousness. Out of sight, out of mind is not an excuse. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — Before I call oral questions, just a reminder to our guests. You are more than welcome, but we ask you not to participate in the debate. And at this time, oral questions.

#### **QUESTION PERIOD**

##### **Support for Agricultural Producers**

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Minister of Agriculture. This week is the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention in Saskatoon and, as the minister knows and many members of the Assembly know, hundreds of rural people are getting together to talk about issues. And one of the issues that is continually raised as we travel the province is the input costs for farmers this coming spring.

In doing a bit of checking with the co-op in Shaunavon at the bulk station this morning, I find that diesel fuel this spring will be 21 per cent more than it was last spring as farmers go to fill their tanks and do their spring work. When it comes to nitrogen fertilizer, the increase is about 30 per cent. And last week, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture announced a 21 per cent increase in premiums for crop insurance.

My question to the minister is, at a time when farmers are facing increases in every area, and especially in the area where we had 10 million acres of unseeded crop, will the government and the minister consider foregoing the increase in insurance premiums for this year in order to allow those farmers to get back on their feet in the areas where we had 10 million acres flooded last spring?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite forgot to mention that this is the largest budget for crop insurance in the province of Saskatchewan's history. He also forgot to mention that the reason that premiums are going up is because grain prices are increasing, and that's a very optimistic sign for the whole agriculture industry in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, every time grain prices go up, the coverage and the risk goes up. And as has been done in the past, premiums go up along with that. Mr. Speaker, coverage has gone up also to an average of \$173 an acre. That's an increase of \$42 an acre, Mr. Speaker, from the 2010 contract. And something that I haven't heard, one producer isn't thinking it's a very good sign and a very good coverage through the crop insurance program.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the \$161 million budget, I think the program is improving. We made other improvements to the program, and we're hoping more farmers take advantage of the program this year.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, again to the minister. He

will know that fertilizer prices, nitrogen fertilizer is going up 30 per cent, diesel fuel up over 20.

And in the area that we're talking about, where the 10 million acres was flooded last year and there was no crop, these farmers are facing very difficult times having enough money to get the crops seeded. And if you don't have enough money to buy diesel fuel and you don't have enough for chemicals and fertilizer, crop insurance is the one area where you don't need a huge increase.

For example, a farmer with 3,000 acres to seed this spring, much of it that didn't produce any crop last year, will see a \$5,000 increase in their premium. And at a time when the bins are empty because they didn't get any crop last year, it's not difficult to understand why many farmers are asking for this kind of help. And at the very time you're saying that the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan with profits of 1.8 billion can't afford to pay another penny, you're saying to farmers at a time when they had no crop they should pay 21 per cent more. How do you square that?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, last year due to the flooding in the province of Saskatchewan, we have just finished sending out cheques to the tune of \$700 million to producers of the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that includes the \$360 million between the federal and provincial government for excess moisture, which was \$30 per eligible acres.

Mr. Speaker, along with that we've made a number of changes to the crop insurance program, where this year . . . where seeded acres when the NDP was in government, flooded acres would go against their seeding intensity and wouldn't be included in the program, this year we've taken that out so that people who were flooded won't lose coverage this year. That's another improvement we've made that the member opposite forgets about.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, we've also done things for the livestock industry in the wet parts of the province. Just lately we announced, along with the federal government, \$30 per tonne for producers that have to buy feed. That was on top of the program we brought out earlier with the feed and livestock transportation support.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we're working with the producers, and it's not the neglect that they had for 16 years under an NDP government.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, the farmers in the flood area, in the area where the 10 million acres were seeded, were calling for between 100 and \$150 per acre for that flooded land. And what they got from the provincial government was \$12 per acre. That's what was done for the farmers in that area.

When it comes to the amount of money it would cost to relieve the increase for one year, it's about \$15 million. That's how

much it would cost to give that help to farmers that they wouldn't see the increase in their premium for one year — \$15 million.

In the third quarter results in your budget, you gave back \$54 million from your department back to treasury, back to the Minister of Finance. Why wouldn't you keep that money and help the farmers in that area rather than give it back to the Minister of Finance and indirectly help out the Minister of Finance, who refuses to look at increasing the royalty for potash corporations who are making record profits in the province of Saskatchewan off of our resource?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, in following the Leader of the Opposition over the last few months, he's been asking for, one, \$100 per flooded acre on top of — on top of, I might add — on top of the 700 million that we've already paid out. That would cost the treasury just \$960 million. Oh, but that's not . . . it doesn't end there. He's also asking for another \$150 a head for cattle, another \$200 million.

It's funny, Mr. Speaker. When that member was Deputy Premier on the government side, the largest budget that he ever had under his watch was just over \$200 million. Last year our budget was 400, just about \$500 million, and also we've paid out \$700 million.

Mr. Speaker, isn't it odd that the member, now that he's in opposition, is asking for millions and millions of dollars? When he was in government, what did he do? He cut programs and raised premiums constantly.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Let's get one thing clear. When the minister adds up the promises that we are making to farmers in Saskatchewan, he adds it up quickly. He comes to a couple of hundred million. But on the other side, he is saying to the Potash Corporation that made, one company made 1.8 billion, he's saying, I can't touch their pile of money but I can't have any more for farmers.

How does that work? And how are farmers and families in this province who are waiting for a bit of help expected to believe a government that can't deal with the potash corporations in getting a little bit more than a nickel per dollar of profit that everybody else has to sacrifice? How do you square that?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has also been asking, I've heard him on the radio saying that we should make this crop insurance program, because it's a really good program and he admitted that, we should make it retroactive. Well that's amazing, Mr. Speaker. That's an amazing comment from that leader. The only thing they made retroactive was the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program and taking hundreds of millions of dollars out of farmers' pockets.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to his comment. I have



two potash mines in my constituency. Mosaic has two potash mines, are investing billions of dollars in my constituency. They're investing billions of dollars in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, they're not too pleased with him wanting to change royalty rates in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that our Minister of Agriculture stands and defends the executives of potash corporations and their profits. I understand that. While thousands of farmers in this province are having a struggle to afford the input costs of diesel fuel, fertilizer, and chemicals, and he stands up and says, the reason I can't get any more because the potash corporations will be upset.

Well I'll tell you this: you deserve to lose your job for that kind of action. You deserve to lose your job when you can't defend . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. Before I recognize the minister, I remind members to place their questions through the Speaker. I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to respond . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. I'd ask . . . Order. I'd ask members to allow the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources to respond.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — I respond to the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, in terms of his thoughts about the \$1.8 billion . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respond to the Leader of the Opposition's call about \$1.8 billion of profits. First of all, Potash Corporation has three main areas of business. They have phosphorous, nitrogen, and potash. The first two, nitrogen and phosphorous, are not located in Saskatchewan. So of the \$1.8 billion of profits, \$1.2 billion is related to potash. So it's \$600 million . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. It's quite ironic that the members at least not allowing the guests and those who are trying to follow the debate to hear what the minister has to say. I recognize the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — So it's \$600 million right there less than what the Leader of the Opposition is quoting. He is saying it's only \$76.5 million in royalties. Well if he looks at the balance

sheet of Potash Corporation, he would find that it's much, much more than that if you just read a few lines further down on the balance sheet. If the Leader of the Opposition, the former oil lobbyist, would take a moment and read down a little bit further on the balance sheet, he would see that they paid, in addition to that, significant income taxes. When you total it all up, Mr. Speaker, on \$1.2 billion of potash profits, they paid about \$350 million. That's what the real number is, and the Leader of the Opposition knows it full well.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I ask members to allow the minister to respond so that people could hear. Order.

The Speaker times the questions, and there's a number of questions already that have been well over. But there are two members to the left of the Speaker that kept interfering, and I ask those members to allow the responses. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

### Mental Health Care Services

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health care in Saskatchewan is in dire straits. It takes a minimum of seven months to see a psychiatrist and another minimum of seven months to get a second visit. Only 10 per cent of children who need mental health assessment and treatment get it. In any given year, 10 per cent of Saskatchewan people will suffer from depression. Mr. Speaker, about 130 Saskatchewan people will take their own lives this year. Mr. Speaker, this government has ignored the needs of mental health patients.

Will the minister commit today to working with stakeholders like the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association or RPNAS to develop an overall plan for mental health care in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said during introductions, I want to recognize and congratulate the great work that the psychiatric nurses do across this province, all the health care professionals, not just psychiatric nurses but all the health care professionals that do absolutely amazing work for those that suffer from mental illness within our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to say that after a number of years of a program not operating in the province, that we now have a program that will offer psychiatric nursing for citizens here in Saskatchewan that want to take it. I was glad to see that 30 graduated from the psychiatric nurses program just recently. Of those 30 that graduated, 25 have stayed here in Saskatchewan to apply their profession right here in Saskatchewan.

I am not standing here to say that there isn't more work to do. Absolutely there is more work to do. We in the Ministry of Health are working closely with the health regions and other organizations to try and improve mental health services through the entire province.

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

Eastview.

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, I did not hear an answer to will he help develop a plan with the stakeholders. I didn't hear that answer at all.

Mr. Speaker, the North Battleford hospital is a flagship for mental health care in Saskatchewan, and it's 100 years old and fairly deteriorated. In 2007 the Sask Party promised they would build a new mental health hospital in North Battleford, and they have broken that promise. One concrete step forward to a mental health care plan would be to build the hospital in North Battleford.

So to the minister today, Mr. Speaker: when will construction begin on that hospital?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very aware of the condition of the provincial hospital, the provincial hospital in North Battleford. I've had the opportunity in three and a half years of being the Health minister to have toured that facility three times. Most recently was a time to visit the ward that introduced Releasing Time to Care and the great advancements that has made.

Having said that though, we know the facility is 100 years old this year. We know that it is in dire need of replacement, Mr. Speaker. We have put planning money towards the health region to look at the facility, to look at it through a lean process to see what needs to be done into the future, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that the facility is deteriorating. It hasn't deteriorated just in the last three and a half years, it has deteriorated over many years, Mr. Speaker. And unfortunately there have been two previous governments that haven't funded a redevelopment of that facility, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you it's a priority on this government's list, and I hope to be moving forward with it in the near future.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Revisits and a plan; no plan really that anybody's seen. No construction, nothing that says when the shovel will go in the ground. Mr. Speaker, there's a severe lack of mental health care services everywhere in Saskatchewan. There needs to be more funding for community-based organizations who work with mental health patients — more psychiatrists, more psychologists, and more psychiatric nurses.

To the minister: will the government commit today to actively work with stakeholders like RPNAS to examine how an expanded scope of practice for psychiatric nurses into a nurse practitioner designation would contribute to better mental health for all Saskatchewan people?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, there is a steering committee in place with the Prairie North Health Region, with other regional health authorities in the Ministry of Health, to

complete a redevelopment proposal on the North Battleford facility, Mr. Speaker.

But we've done more than that, Mr. Speaker. We've put \$14.9 million into the Irene and Les Dubé Centre, Mr. Speaker, that's located on the beautiful South Saskatchewan River in Saskatoon. Some of the most expensive real estate in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and couldn't be a better facility for that location, Mr. Speaker. There for the opening, it is a very, very impressive facility, Mr. Speaker. For once, instead of a facility being built in the back bushes for mental health, this one is a state-of-the-art facility with a beautiful view, Mr. Speaker.

Private individuals have put millions and millions into that facility, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely there's more to do, but this government has taken some steps, and more steps will be taken into the future.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — This minister and that government can take no credit for the mental health facility in Saskatoon. We did it. Just because you get to cut the ribbon doesn't mean you had anything to do with it.

Mr. Speaker, an RPNAS association white paper predicts that mental health care problems will affect almost every family in Saskatchewan at some point. Wait times to see a psychiatrist are increasing. Suicides among young people, especially in northern Saskatchewan, are increasing. We need more psychiatric nurse education seats and a psychiatric nurse practitioner program.

To the Minister: will he commit today to increasing the education seats in the RPN [registered psychiatric nurse] program and to funding a psychiatric nurse practitioner program, so we have a stronger team to address mental health needs in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm quite astounded that member would stand up and try and take the full credit for the Irene and Les Dubé Centre by saying we did it, Mr. Speaker. I can guarantee you that government didn't do it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, individuals like Irene and Les Dubé who donated millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, are the people that made that facility come to reality. People like Merlis Belsher, Mr. Speaker, that donated over a million dollars are the people that made that facility come to reality.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, I'll take no counsel from that member. After 16 years of NDP government, they cancelled the psychiatric nurses program. In 2008 our government introduced a psychiatric nursing program: 30 seats, Mr. Speaker, 25 of which are now working in Saskatchewan of the last graduating class.

We will certainly work with post secondary education and the Psychiatric Nurses Association to see whether we need to

increase those seats. But I can guarantee you, if we ever go back to the NDP government, that program will be cancelled too.

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

### Child Care Spaces

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people want the provincial government to make early learning and child care a priority, a top priority. But YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] Canada released a report yesterday that shows Saskatchewan ranks last in the country when it comes to providing regulated child care spaces. Saskatchewan has licensed child care spaces for only 9 per cent of children under the age of six, compared to the national average of 20 per cent. Families in Saskatchewan are having a harder time finding and paying for quality child care than anywhere else in Canada.

To the Minister: why is the government refusing to adequately invest in early learning and child care and instead is just following an ad hoc, piecemeal approach?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I'll tell you what approach that this government is not going to follow, Mr. Speaker, and that's the approach that the NDP used when they were in government. We are growing in this province, and child care spaces are becoming increasingly important. And that is why since forming government, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the spaces within this province by 30 per cent. Of those 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker, a 50 per cent increase for infants and toddlers.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done. We inherited a disaster when it comes to child care spaces. But you know what? The last NDP Health minister, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, did you know what she had to say, Mr. Speaker? She said that a 5.7 per cent increase was, and I quote, "a good increase," Mr. Speaker. Well it isn't a good increase. We have been increasing far more than that, and we're going to continue to do so.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, it appears the Minister of Health has slipped this minister his speaking notes because it's the same answer on topic after topic. What is clear is that an ad hoc, piecemeal approach of this government is why we're dead last in the entire country when it comes to child care spaces.

Investing in child care makes sense not only from an educational perspective, but it's good for our economy. According to the YWCA, every dollar invested in child care, for every dollar invested \$2.50 goes back into our economy. And that's a big return on the investment. And over 13 per cent of women working part-time in 2009 were doing so not by choice, but because they couldn't access or afford child care. That's a whole lot of people being forced out of the full-time workforce, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister: why does the government not recognize that investing in child care makes good sense for our economy?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, investing in child care spaces is a huge, good decision for our economy. We absolutely agree with that. What we don't agree with is what happened under the NDP, and we do not want to go back to those old days. Because when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting in the cabinet table making decisions, they went back and lost 228 spaces. That's what they did when they were in government.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about what we inherited. Well at that time in 2007 what was the priority for the NDP? Well it certainly wasn't child care spaces. Manitoba had at that time over 26,000 spaces. Alberta had 71,000 spaces. And do you know how many spaces the NDP developed in Saskatchewan? Under 9,000, Mr. Speaker.

We have increased by 30 per cent over the last three years. We are going to aggressively address this issue. It's a very important issue, Mr. Speaker. We're not going back to what the NDP did.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, making child care a top priority is not just about improving educational outcomes and helping our economy, though those are important. It's about supporting families. If the minister can't find the money to make the appropriate investments in early learning and child care, perhaps she ought to talk to the Premier. She could leave a note and convince him that it's time for a royalty review. An increase in potash royalties could help pay for more child care spaces and put our province at the top of the national list and not the very bottom.

Mr. Speaker, what is clear when it comes to agricultural producers, when it comes to mental health services, when it comes to early learning and care spots here in the province, Mr. Speaker, this government chooses to defend PotashCorp executives every time over the people of Saskatchewan.

To the minister: why are they turning their backs on the people of Saskatchewan and refusing a review of royalty rates?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — What this government is truly excited about is the growth that's happening in our province, and we have realized that that comes with challenges such as child care spaces.

What we are not interested in is irresponsible job-killing policies that are coming forward from that NDP party. That would significantly stop the growth within this province, and that was not what this government is interested in.

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

## 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 Northeast.

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it truly is an honour and a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to enter into this debate, the debate on Bill 161, the Act to amend *The Election Act, 1996*. Mr. Speaker, it is . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I'd ask the minister and the member from Regina . . . or pardon me, Prince Albert, to have their discussion outside the Chamber. I would ask . . . I'd ask the minister and the member from Prince Albert to have their discussion behind the bar.

[Interjections]

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

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know that I could draw so much attention with the word thank you, but okay. But thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, it is truly an honour and a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to enter into this debate. It is one of the opportunities for me to stand in this House and take part in a debate that was, I suppose, in some ways narrowing down.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I've indicated that I will not be seeking re-election with the next opportunity, which is likely going to be this fall, and therefore the number of times I'll be able to get on my feet here will probably be in the narrowing numbers. But I assure you, Mr. Speaker, this will not be my last speech in this session. I do plan to make two or three more.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, I can say for all of us, it's truly an honour and a pleasure to have the ability to represent folks from Saskatchewan in this fine legislature. I know that I can say that I am truly honoured to have the privilege of representing the good folks in Regina Northeast for the . . . And I know I've said this before, Mr. Speaker, but I believe it bears repeating, is that whenever you travel in Saskatchewan and wherever you travel in Saskatchewan, the people you meet are certainly warm and friendly and hospitable people. And there are no warmer, more friendly, and more hospitable people than the people in Regina Northeast, and it has truly been an honour for me to have the privilege of representing them and to be able to represent their opinions, their thoughts, and their wishes in this great Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this particular Bill, as I said earlier, Bill 161, the Act to amend *The Election Act, 1996*, we certainly have had a chance to glance at the Bill, and it's certainly a Bill that deserves very close scrutiny. I think any time that we are tampering with the Bills and the legislation that enforces and strengthens our democracy, we need to do so with a very open mind. But we also have to do so with the purpose of ensuring that democracy stays strong and ensuring that democracy is even expanded where possible, and where we recognize the ability and the need, to expand democracy and make it available in easier fashion, in easier fashion, to all people who live within our society.

In this case, in this province of Saskatchewan here, I think the role of government of any political stripe should be looking at ways and means to strengthen democracy, looking for ways and means to enhance democracy, and looking at ways and means to make it more acceptable or more easily obtained by the people of this province who we have the privilege of representing in this great legislature.

Governments should be looking at ways and means to encourage more people to take part in elections. After all, Mr. Speaker, that is the mainstay of democracy. The mainstay of democracy is people participating at election time. What we need to do is ensure that those numbers of people who participate stay very high and that we have a strong representation within the electoral process every four years. Whenever the election is held, we would like to see . . . Personally I'd like to see 100 per cent turnout. Likely that's not the case for various reasons, Mr. Speaker. But we certainly want to see a very, very high percentage of people participating at election time. That's what makes democracy work, is people participating in the democratic system, people coming out and expressing their wishes, their views, and their opinions.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what makes our system so great, is its opportunity every four years for people to express their opinions on the record of government, the promises put forward by the various political parties, and what people want to . . . and the direction people want to see this province move in. So this is why it is, I think, important, Mr. Speaker, that one of the factors that the government needs to do whenever it makes any changes to legislation is to ensure that those changes will reflect the ability for people to take part in the electoral process. It should be made easier. They should not be discouraged from taking part, and they should be in fact encouraged to take part.

And, Mr. Speaker, that unfortunately I don't see in this Bill. I have had the opportunity to glance through this Bill and do a bit of research on it — and not as much time as I would have liked to have had, but we've had the opportunity to do some research on this Bill — and there are certain changes, proposed changes, the amendments that the government is proposing here, I do not think, I do not think answers the basic needs of what I think a government should be doing, and that is encouraging people to participate. I think the changes in this Bill absolutely do the opposite.

I see not anywhere here, Mr. Speaker, where I see it made easier for people to participate. What I do see proposed here is barriers, barriers being raised by the government to people taking part in the electoral process.

After all, that's what makes our democracy work. That's what makes our system so strong. And that's what's made our system survive the many assaults it's had on it over the years and if not decades, over maybe hundreds and hundreds of years, Mr. Speaker. Democracy has emerged as the true form of political representation of people because it has been able to withstand the pressures because it's allowed each and every individual the right to take part in the election, the right to express their opinions, the right to express their views, and the right to select their representation and their representatives.

[14:30]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, to sum it all up I guess, as my colleague would say, it's the right to vote. It's what really reflects democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this Bill, particularly the new sections, sections 72 and 72.1 under section 5 on page 2 of the printed Bill, we see section 5 that is repealed and it is followed by the following, Mr. Speaker. That would be section 72(1), when an individual is not eligible for a ballot paper or to vote.

No individual is entitled to a ballot paper or to vote if the individual:

(a) does not provide to the deputy returning officer and poll clerk the satisfactory evidence of his or her identity . . . [origin of residency] required pursuant to section 72.1;

Mr. Speaker, I like . . . find it interesting, the usage of the language in this particular section, the fact that the government says, "satisfactory evidence." The fact that the person showing up, the fact that the person saying, giving their word they are a resident of the constituency, and they are within the rules and regulations required for the eligible vote, and that they have the ability to vote — now that, in the past, Mr. Speaker, used to be good enough. And I believe this still should be good enough because that allowed the person to vote.

Now the scrutineer, a representative of the candidate, decided that perhaps this person didn't qualify to vote. They could challenge that vote. That wouldn't stop the individual from casting their ballot. They'd still cast their ballot, only that ballot would be handled in a different manner until it was assured that there was no improprieties within the individual's right to vote. So, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't seem to be the case here. Now what the government is calling for is satisfactory evidence.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it says . . . also goes on to say in section (b), "if required to do so, [and] refuses to make the voter's declaration." Well, Mr. Speaker, evidence. What is evidence? Some indication of the person's name. Some indication of the person's address. So it sounds to me like, Mr. Speaker, that the government is looking for a driver's licence. It seems to me like the government is saying that you have to produce a valid driver's licence if you want to vote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government has done any research on this to identify how many people in Saskatchewan do not have a driver's licence. There are, I'm sure, a number. And I would think it might surprise you and I to find out what that number might be. I think it'd be a significant number of

people who don't have a driver's licence.

In fact I know of a couple, Mr. Speaker, who I believe have a driver's licence, but they certainly do not own a car. And it is because they have chose to do so. They use, while in the city here, their home, and they go to their work and to do their business and they go to the grocery shop, and they use public transportation. And I do know that on a rare occasion when they, because of family requirements, they need to travel outside the city, they will rent a car and they will make their trip. In that case, Mr. Speaker, at least one of them has a driver's licence. I don't know about both of them having a driver's licence. I do know that one has. So there's a case, Mr. Speaker, where we could possibly have a situation where we don't have an individual who doesn't have a driver's licence, doesn't have that photo ID [identification].

Well, Mr. Speaker, I once again say that the government is straying away from what I think the principle of a government should be when addressing *The Election Act*, and that is to try to improve the Act so that it encourages more people to participate, encourages more people to take part in elections at election time. It encourages people and makes it easier for them to be able to participate in elections and rather than discouraging them.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I see so far in this Act is that it certainly, certainly . . . The indications here is that the government wishes a voter to be able to provide satisfactory evidence of the voter's identity and residence. Well, Mr. Speaker, what is that evidence? Is it going to be a photo ID driver's licence or a photo ID of some type? Not everyone has that for various reasons, Mr. Speaker. And yet they are citizens of this great province of ours, and I think that they are entitled to vote.

It shouldn't be . . . The voting privilege shouldn't hinge on the individual's ability to provide a photo ID or to provide some type of satisfactory evidence. Rather what it should be, Mr. Speaker, is it should be an encouragement for people to participate in election, encouragement for people to be able to express their opinions, to be able to take part equally in selecting their representative to represent them in this great Assembly for the next four years. That, Mr. Speaker, should be the goal of government. It shouldn't be the goal of government to discourage people. It should be the goal of government to encourage people.

Mr. Speaker, it says here, if the voter or individual's name appears on a voters list, one original piece of identification that will show the voter or voter's photograph, name, and address. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's also suggesting it should be issued by the Government of Saskatchewan, the Government of Canada, or an agency of these governments.

Well, Mr. Speaker, once again we may have individuals out there who don't have a photo ID because they don't have a provincial driver's licence. They don't have a provincial driver's licence. And if they don't have a provincial driver's licence, Mr. Speaker, it's a good possibility they don't have a photo ID.

And yet we have a government here that wants to make changes

to *The Election Act* that's going to require people to produce a photo ID in order to take part in an election process.

That, Mr. Speaker, certainly, certainly is not encouraging democracy. That, Mr. Speaker, is just the opposite. It's discouraging people from participating in elections, discouraging people from taking part in the basics of a democratic process, and that is the right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, suggesting here that two pieces of prescribed information, each of which establishes a voter or the individual's name and at least one of the voter's or individual's address.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation as it's emerging in this province — probably for the first time in our history if not certainly in a great, great many years — we're finding more and more situations where affordable housing is not available. In a lot of cases, we may have Saskatchewan citizens who do not have a permanent address simply because they haven't got affordable housing and they're making do with whatever arrangements they can make with friends or family until, you know, a break comes along, I guess you would say. Or until they get the opportunity to be able to afford a house which by the way, Mr. Speaker, in our economy today is getting more and more distant from a lot of people, that ability to afford a home or to afford even the ability to rent a home or to rent an apartment or rent a living space of some type. It's getting to be harder and harder for a lot of folks out there because of the increased costs of rent, the increased costs of housing. And unfortunately, salaries and wages are not keeping up to those costs, Mr. Speaker.

So we're finding people who in the past were able to secure adequate housing for themselves and their family are now finding that is an extremely stressful challenge, and that in many cases are not being able to meet that challenge simply because their family income isn't adequate enough to be able to maintain a roof over their head, Mr. Speaker, and they have to look at other alternatives. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, they may not have — they may not have, as required here — a document that will indicate their address.

You know, I know that in the past members of the government would say, well all a person has to do to be able to satisfy the requirements here as to their address, they'd simply have to go to the polls with a document such as a telephone bill or a power bill or a gas bill. Well if you don't have a home, Mr. Speaker, and you don't have that residence and you don't have those three particular documents, then it makes it more difficult, more difficult for an individual to be able to satisfy the government's requirements here within this legislation of being able to provide a document that is either provincial government, federal government, or an agency of either one of those governments that indicates their residence, simply because they may not have that address. They may not have that document simply because they don't have a residence of their own. They may be sharing it with others. And, Mr. Speaker, these are citizens of Saskatchewan. These are people who, in many cases, were born and raised right here and should have the right to vote, and this particular legislation will not enable them to vote. In fact what it does, Mr. Speaker, it discourages them from voting.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think there are a number of flaws, a number of flaws within this particular Bill. And in some ways it surprises me because I would have thought that, before tinkering with a document or documents that support our democratic process, the government would certainly have done its homework and certainly have done its research. Yet there's no indication of that, Mr. Speaker, in any of the evidence that I've been able to unearth through my bit of research, and that is to answer some of the basic questions that I think a government should be able to answer when it proposes changes to any Act, let alone an election Act, an Act that is the very core of our democratic process here.

And one of those questions, Mr. Speaker, is, why does the government feel the need to make these amendments? Why does the government feel the need to make these changes? Why is it the government feels the need to have people required now to produce a photo ID in order to participate in the electoral process? Is it not good enough to be able to take their word, their sworn statement, that they are citizens of Saskatchewan and have the right to vote?

But no, no longer is that adequate, according to the amendments here. What this government wants to do is to change that. They want to require that the good folks coming to participate in the election have two pieces of information or identification evidence as it states in this Bill here. Two pieces would have to provide the evidence of the voter's name and evidence of the voter's address. Mr. Speaker, my question still remains: why? Why does the government feel these changes are necessary?

My next question, Mr. Speaker, to the government, would be, who asked for these changes? Who asked for these changes? Who came forward to government and lobbied government saying, we need to make these changes to *The Election Act* because it will make *The Election Act* more democratic? Or who was it that came forward with this request that the government look into and make these amendments to *The Election Act* and for what purpose? What purpose will this provide? Will this improve the access to taking part in the election process by the people of Saskatchewan? No, Mr. Speaker, it'll just do the opposite. It will discourage people from taking part.

Mr. Speaker, before making these proposed amendments and bringing them forward to this Assembly, did the government do any consulting? Did the government do any consulting before bringing this Bill forward? And if they did, who did they talk to? They haven't provided us any of that information, Mr. Speaker. They're just saying, here's the changes that we want to make to the Act. They're saying that we want to make these changes and we want you to debate them in the House, but then at the end of the day we want to be able to get our way and simply force this Bill through.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're doing so without answering any of the questions, the basic questions, which once again I think is the basic questions of democracy. It's, who did you consult with? Who did you talk to? Who did the government talk to about making these changes? Who was it that asked for these changes? Who did the government talk to about making these changes?

And, Mr. Speaker, if — and I say if — if the government says that they did consult, they did consult with the people of Saskatchewan or groups within Saskatchewan, then my question is, what method did they use to consult? Did they use an information letter? Did they just send a letter out to a select group of people or to perhaps all people of Saskatchewan saying, we're going to make changes to *The Election Act* and we want your input? We want you to tell us what you think should be changed. Or did they send a letter out saying, here are the proposed changes; which one do you think, which group do you think should be included in the amendments to *The Election Act*?

[14:45]

Did they do a telephone survey, Mr. Speaker? Did they use the Internet, Mr. Speaker? Did they send out emails? Did they send out information? What type of method did the government use to consult with the people of Saskatchewan before coming forward with these proposed changes? If they consulted with anybody, Mr. Speaker, who did they consult with and what method did they use to do that consulting?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I see no evidence here, but I'd like to know what was the feedback the government got from its consulting, if it says it went out and talked to Saskatchewan people before making these proposed changes to *The Election Act*, and who did they talk to? But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, what was their feedback? What was their feedback? Who was it that said that they needed to have these changes because this would strengthen democracy, this would make things better for Saskatchewan people, this would make things so that more people in Saskatchewan would be able to participate at election time? This would encourage people to get out there and share their opinions, express their views, and select, play a hand and role in selecting their representation, Mr. Speaker. Those are the questions that have not been answered in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and have not been supplied by government in anywhere.

So this obviously, Mr. Speaker, certainly, certainly leaves a lot of questions to be asked, a lot of questions that need to be answered by the government, a lot of questions that need to be answered by the general public as to their opinions on these changes and how they see this affecting them, how they see this affecting their communities, how they see this affecting their province, and how they see this affecting the principles of democracy, the pillars that hold up our society, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, as you can tell, there are a lot of unanswered questions and a lot of questions that need to be answered. Obviously this government has not provided that information, and therefore the opposition is going to have to take more time in order to study this Bill and to be able research this Bill and identify even greater problems than I have been able to. Because I do believe that this Bill is full of issues that certainly do not further the causes of democracy but in fact, Mr. Speaker, does just the opposite. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll move adjournment of debate.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Regina Northeast has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 161, *The Election Amendment Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the

motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. Carried.

### Bill No. 162

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

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 162, *The Election Amendment Act*. This is again a very important Bill to be discussing in the House, just as the previous Bill was that was referred to by the member for Regina Northeast. These are some changes that are going to deeply affect the potential right to vote in the province of Saskatchewan, which of course is an incredible right to have, as many others in many other countries do not. And it is also obviously a substantial responsibility.

Now the fact that the changes that are proposed are not going to be providing more inclusiveness but rather are going to exclude people from their right to vote is of great concern to the NDP opposition, Mr. Speaker. The right to vote has an impact on the decisions that affect individuals in their daily lives, and therefore is fundamental in terms of their ability to have some say in what's happening in their daily lives. And it's a right that should be exercised by everyone in a free and democratic society and not just the comfortable or the privileged or those who are doing relatively well under the status quo, Mr. Speaker.

Now the list of people that this Sask Party government has failed is long, Mr. Speaker. It's very long and it's growing by the day. So those people especially, Mr. Speaker, are the ones that want to have some ability to have their say in what happens in future elections, Mr. Speaker. Clearly those people are going to be paying more attention to what the various parties are doing. They're certainly going to pay attention to the Sask Party government's record over the last number of years as to the promises that have been broken, the promises that have been changed without consultation with the public, Mr. Speaker. And quite frankly, one of those issues that's been changed without due consultation, Mr. Speaker, is precisely Bill 162 which is what we're speaking of at the moment.

Now one of the groups that this government has failed is seniors, Mr. Speaker. The government, this government, the Sask Party government has failed and is failing the seniors in the province of Saskatchewan. Seniors are struggling to cope with the rising cost of living, in particular rising rents and the rising cost of electricity. They're frustrated by this government's broken promises on health care. And many seniors are telling us that they feel like they're being betrayed and let down by the Sask Party government. The rents are going from rates of where some seniors are telling me that they were paying \$600 a month rent in 2007, are now looking at over \$1,000 a month for their rent a few short years later, Mr.

Speaker.

And what's most appalling about that, Mr. Speaker . . . And you know what? What's most appalling actually is that they're chirping from their seats. They're angry that I'm speaking of these points.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Members are not to draw the members into the debate. And also the member knows that the member should be relating the comments to the Bill, and while they can be relating to individuals, tie it to the Bill. That's all you have to do.

**Ms. Morin:** — With reference to Bill 162, I'm talking about Bill 162 and the members from the opposite side don't seem to like to hear what they're hearing, Mr. Speaker. And I wonder why that is? Is it because they don't care about the seniors of their province? Or is it that the Sask Party government is in denial about what's happening to the seniors of this province? I would say it's probably both, Mr. Speaker, because the reality is that Bill 162 is directly affecting the seniors of this province in terms of their ability to vote, Mr. Speaker, because they will have a large amount of stake in terms of what happens in the next election, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the people that are being most badly hurt in terms of the policies that are happening under this government, Mr. Speaker, are the senior citizens in this province.

The rents are going from \$600 a month, when the Sask Party government was elected in 2007, to well over \$1,000 a month currently, Mr. Speaker — well over \$1,000 a month. Now whether the Sask Party government wants to hear it or not, the reality is seniors are on a fixed income. They don't have ability to increase their income. They don't see any help coming from the Sask Party government on rent control. They don't see any other ability to increase their ability to pay their bills in terms of helping them with their electricity bills or their natural gas bills, Mr. Speaker.

So the reality is that seniors in this province are most directly being affected by the Government of Saskatchewan and will have the most at stake with respect to Bill 162 and the right to vote in this next election, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, at a time in their lives when they no longer potentially have a driver's licence, which of course is that lovely piece of photo ID that the Sask Party government now wants to make mandatory for the seniors in this province to have in order for them to be able to exercise their right to vote, Mr. Speaker, this is what the Sask Party government has decided to do. Seniors are no longer driving, don't have a driver's licence any more. So what exactly are they supposed to be presenting at the voting booth when they want to go and vote in the next election?

Now the Sask Party government will tell you that, well they can go and get a photo ID. It doesn't have to be a driver's licence. They can go to any licence issuer and get a photo ID. Well isn't that fantastic, Mr. Speaker? So we're going to make people go through the extra trouble to exercise their right to vote in the country of Canada. Their absolute divine right in this country is to be able to exercise their right to vote. And what does the Sask Party government want to do with Bill 162? They want to

make that right more difficult for seniors in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So seniors don't have a vehicle, but they're supposed to get to a licence distributor to be able to get a photo ID. First of all, it's the issue of getting there. Second of all, it's the issue of cost. Not everybody wants to be . . . or has the ability, I should say, to afford the \$10 that it would cost to get the photo ID. And, Mr. Speaker, third of all, a lot of seniors that I visit in their homes, I visit in their homes because why, Mr. Speaker? Because they have mobility issues, Mr. Speaker. Bill 162 flies in the face of those people who have difficulty to be able to access those photo ID, Mr. Speaker, because they have mobility issues and can't leave their homes, Mr. Speaker.

So when the Sask Party government decides it wants to make voting in this province more difficult for the seniors of this province, they take nothing into account about what seniors actually face in the reality of their lives, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Sask Party government is all about.

Now they've also failed other people in other walks of life. For instance students are angry about the rising costs of tuition, Mr. Speaker, and rent and utilities and car insurance. So on top of the fact that they've got all of these financial pressures to deal with, Mr. Speaker, what are we going to make them do? We're going to make them purchase a photo ID. Because hey, the government doesn't mind the extra \$10 per student in their coffers, and who cares whether the students can afford to buy the photo ID anyways. Then I guess they just don't have the right to vote, which again is one of the more disenfranchised groups of voters, Mr. Speaker.

We see the voter percentages falling on a continual basis, whether it's municipal elections, whether it's provincial elections, or whether it's federal elections. And one of the largest groups of disenfranchised voters is the students, Mr. Speaker. And so what are we doing? Instead of encouraging them to vote, instead of inviting them in to vote, instead of making ways easier for them to vote, Mr. Speaker, we're going to make it even more challenging. That's what the Sask Party government is saying.

The Sask Party government is saying, if you want to vote, if you want to have the right to vote, you're going to follow our rules regardless of whether it makes it easier or more difficult for you to vote. And that's what Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, is all about. It's all about disenfranchising those that are already disenfranchised from voting, Mr. Speaker. Because who are they catering to? They're catering to those who are happy with the status quo or those who have driver's licences and photo IDs and don't see any problem with what the Sask Party government wants to do.

But are they listening? Are they listening to those that are already disenfranchised or those that will have difficulty meeting the standard perhaps as being set out, Mr. Speaker? No, not at all. Because why? Because it's not an issue for them, Mr. Speaker. It's not the people that will want to vote for them, and so it's not an issue for the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. That's why. That's exactly why.

Another group that's disenfranchised, Mr. Speaker, are First



Nation and Métis people in this province, Mr. Speaker. They're angry. They're angry about the government's lack of consultation on issues, many issues, not the least of which, Mr. Speaker, not the least of which was *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker, something that this House knows an awful lot about, Mr. Speaker, because we had lengthy, lengthy debates on this one, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that the Sask Party government talks about having consulted with people, but didn't actually do it.

So Bill 162 is incredibly important to the First Nations and Métis people of this province, Mr. Speaker, because those people especially, Mr. Speaker, want to have their say in the next election. They want to have their say. But what is a difficulty for the First Nation and Métis people in this province, Mr. Speaker?

Well first of all, do they even have a licence issuer anywhere close to where they live? And for a large part of those people, Mr. Speaker, for a large part of the people who are First Nations and Métis people, it's not even close to being convenient to finding a licence issuer, Mr. Speaker, let alone the fact that these are also the people who are hardest hit, hardest hit by the policies of this Sask Party government in terms of the rising cost of living that's happening in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And so what's happening? You're telling them that they have to find some way of getting to a licence issuer. You're telling them that they have to find some way of finding the money to be able to pay for that photo licence, Mr. Speaker. And what does the Sask Party government say about that? Nothing. All of a sudden they are deathly quiet, Mr. Speaker, because they know that all of this is exactly what is being said. They know that this is true. They know that these complaints are coming in. They know that these are the concerns of the First Nation and Métis people in this province. And what are they doing to address that, Mr. Speaker? They're doing absolutely nothing. So Bill 162 is a critical Bill to those individuals, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

And let's talk about consultation, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about consultation. Have they even done any consultations, Mr. Speaker? Because I've got to tell you, from the amount of people that I get emailing me, phoning me, writing letters to me, stopping me in the grocery store, on the street, stopping me at cultural events in the city, stopping me at cultural events around the province, stopping me at sporting events around the province, they're all saying the same thing.

They're all saying the same thing: why is it that we never heard anything about this? Why wasn't there public consultations on this, Mr. Speaker? Why is it that the government is simply proceeding with something that is going to disenfranchise voters even more instead of feeling that they can have more inclusiveness in the voting process, Mr. Speaker? Why is that? Why is that? It's hard to understand, Mr. Speaker.

And when we hear from the government, from the Sask Party government that they did consultations on *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* for instance and name six organizations, when the NDP opposition actually speaks to those organizations, those six organizations, what do we find out? We find out that

five of the six organizations say that they weren't consulted with.

So, Mr. Speaker, even when the Sask Party government claims that they have done consultations, those consultations haven't actually been done or haven't been done in a meaningful way where the people that they claim, those stakeholders that they claim they spoke to have felt that they had any meaningful input on those consultations, Mr. Speaker.

So again why is it that the Sask Party government is proceeding with Bill 162 without having done province-wide consultations as to whether or not this is something that is going to disenfranchise voters further?

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about a group of individuals who are going to have probably . . . well, not probably, they are going to have the biggest problem with this change in legislation, Mr. Speaker. And that of course is the homeless people. Now, Mr. Speaker, the number I have in my notes is approximately that there are 2,200 homeless people in Regina alone. But I have to tell you, the research that was done for my notes, Mr. Speaker, was done last fall, and we know those numbers have increased, Mr. Speaker.

So how sad, how sad that in a city of Regina, in a city with the population that Regina has, that we have over 2,200 homeless people in the city of Regina right now. And they're angry, Mr. Speaker. They're angry that this government has done nothing, absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker — zip, nada, nix, nein — to help them put a roof over their heads. Nothing. They've done nothing. They haven't introduced rent controls, which is something that the NDP opposition has been talking about.

And some of them just went . . . [inaudible] . . . about government. Well, Mr. Speaker, I encourage them to listen because if they're not going to address the problems of the people of Saskatchewan, this NDP opposition will be the government in November of 2011, Mr. Speaker. And this NDP government will address the concerns of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, and not just the comfortable few that the Sask Party government seems to be catering to.

So with respect to Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, the homeless people of this province have the most concerns, Mr. Speaker, because how exactly do they prove their residence when they don't have a fixed address, Mr. Speaker? How exactly do they do that? Now I don't hear any responses, any answers or quite frankly anything coming from the Sask Party government on the questions that we've been asking about Bill 162, Mr. Speaker.

How are people going to deal with the fact that they don't have a fixed address, Mr. Speaker? How is that going to happen? And yet the Sask Party government has done nothing to explain that to the people of Saskatchewan. They've done nothing to explain that when asked about that by the media. They've done nothing to explain that when asked the question by numerous members of opposition including myself, Mr. Speaker, because there are two Bills that are very similar, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of the questions on these Bills are very similar, Mr. Speaker. And my colleague from Regina Northeast just spoke passionately about the other Bill prior to Bill 162, Mr. Speaker.

Now you know my colleague from Regina Northeast asked another question that I'd like to reiterate and that is, who exactly asked for these changes? Who asked for these changes, Mr. Speaker? The only evidence that I can find is that the provincial government, the Sask Party government wants to be in line with the Harper Tories. They want to streamline themselves with the Harper Tories.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that's the wisest thing for this provincial government to be doing at this point in time because, Mr. Speaker, when these proposed changes were brought forward by the Harper Tories, let me tell you about some of the comments that were made at that time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at that time when Bill C-31 was introduced into the House of Commons, there were a number of MPs — Paul Dewar who is the MP for Ottawa Centre, he's the NDP MP for Ottawa Centre and Libby Davies who is the NDP MP for Vancouver East — raised concerns about Bill C-31 at that time and talked about the fact that it would further disenfranchise voters, Mr. Speaker, and especially in their constituencies.

I'd like to quote Ms. Davies:

"We have to protect the integrity of the voting system," she said.

"New requirements for voter ID will add further barriers to voting for marginalized low-income people, and seriously undermine the right to vote," added Davies, whose riding includes the downtown east side where hundreds of people live in homeless shelters and rooming homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see that these are also the comments that are being made at the federal level. But what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is these comments were being made . . . the date on this is February 13th of 2007. So on February 13th, 2007, we hear federal MPs [Member of Parliament] raising concerns about the proposed changes by the Harper Tories to Bill C-31 which requires photo ID. And now we hear that the Sask Party government wants to align themselves with the Harper Tories. Well I mean it's no surprise, quite frankly.

Although given the bad news they've received on various projects over the while, one would wonder if there's still that close and fuzzy relationship — for instance the lack of or the non-funding, I should say, to the domed stadium here in Saskatchewan, and of course the non-funding to the carbon sequestration project, as well as many others of course, Mr. Speaker.

So what is interesting is that they're wanting to align themselves with the Harper Tories with respect to making voter ID a requirement. Now what's interesting about that, Mr. Speaker, is that by doing so they're pre-empting a legal challenge that's currently taking place in British Columbia by a coalition of organizations including people with disabilities, seniors, renters, and people who are homeless, Mr. Speaker — the very people that I've just spoken about who would be most disadvantaged, shall we say, with these proposed changes to Bill 162.

So, Mr. Speaker, one wonders why they would be coming forward with a Bill that they already know is causing concerns at the federal level and is already being challenged in terms of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Why would they come forward with those changes now, Mr. Speaker, instead of waiting to see what happens with that challenge in British Columbia for instance, Mr. Speaker?

It's interesting that they are willing to disenfranchise voters even further. But again, as I said, the voters that they are looking at disenfranchising even further are not voters that would likely vote for the Sask Party government anyways, because the Sask Party government is making life more difficult for these voters in the province of Saskatchewan at the time as we speak, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government also claims that people will not be disenfranchised, which is quite interesting, pointing to measures included in the legislation that gives people alternatives. But all of us in this Assembly have seen instances where deputy returning officers have been overzealous in their interpretation of rules. So there's a very real danger that the clear preference for photo ID could lead some people to become disenfranchised, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, everyone wants to make sure that the voting process is very tight in terms of making sure that everything is above board, Mr. Speaker, but in doing so, sometimes those processes by the deputy returning officers tend to be at the — how should I say? — disadvantage again of the voters who are there in a legitimate fashion to exercise their right to vote. So one worries when the discretionary power is put in the hands of those few individuals, open for interpretation, Mr. Speaker, with respect to Bill 162.

Now you know, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of other concerns with Bill 162 and not the least of which is for instance the lack, again the lack of consultation. Because this House for instance, there was a bipartisan committee that recommended a Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Speaker. And what happened in the Sask Party caucus, Mr. Speaker? They decided to veto that recommendation, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that typically when the bipartisan committees make recommendations, the House accepts those recommendations.

So again we still have questions as to why the Sask Party caucus decided to veto that recommendation. We have not heard any reasons for that. We have not heard any arguments, so one can leave the imagination open to wonder why that decision was vetoed by the Sask Party caucus, Mr. Speaker. And of course there are a number of assumptions that are being made because the Sask Party caucus is not being forthright in why that, exactly, that veto took place.

And, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 162 we're also seeing that they're further disenfranchising voters from being able to exercise their right to vote. And we also see that the Sask Party is not about — how should I say? — is not unfamiliar with the challenge that's currently going on by another political party to be able to access funds, to be able to participate in the next election, Mr. Speaker. And there are some Sask Party members that are actually named in that legal challenge, Mr. Speaker.

And obviously the people that would like to vote for that political party who is not able to access their funds, which is, of course, is the Progressive Conservative Party, would like to be able to vote in the next election and vote for their party of choice which is the Progressive Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker. But because there is a court challenge that's happening, and as I said there were some Sask Party members that are being named in that court challenge, they will not potentially be able to vote for their political party of choice. So those again are people that would want to vote in the next election because they're disenfranchised voters. They would have a large stake in Bill 162 to ensure that those people that want to vote for the Progressive Conservative Party have the ability to do so. And if it's going to make things more difficult for some of their members to vote in the next election, that would be of great concern to the Progressive Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker.

Because again, they're not being able to access the funds that they need to be able to fully participate in the next election, Mr. Speaker, and one has to wonder why that's taking place, why they're not being able to access the \$3 million fund — I believe where it stands now — why they're not being able to access the \$3 million fund that is rightfully the money of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan. And why the Sask Party government would want to make it more difficult for their members to be able to vote in this next election, is a little suspect as well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say.

So Bill 162 seems to have a lot of tentacles that it reaches out and into, Mr. Speaker. So it's not just . . . It doesn't seem that it's just to disenfranchise the voting process for those who are being hardest hit by the Sask Party government and its policies like the seniors, like the First Nations people, like the Métis people, like the students, like the homeless people, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And I'm hearing from one of my colleagues that northern mayors are very upset about some of the policies that the Sask Party government is implementing and that northern mayors are worried about the fact that their members won't be able to access their right to vote, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Now the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm hearing different comments from different ministers, one who might have a little bit more knowledge on the portfolio of First Nations and Métis affairs but, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering how many discussions he's had with those people in the First Nations and Métis communities to ensure that they are not opposed to Bill 162, Mr. Speaker.

Because what I'm hearing from my colleagues — who do not only consult with people in the North but actually live in those northern communities and participate in those northern communities on a not necessarily daily basis since we're in session right now, Mr. Speaker, but are certainly there on the weekends and are actively participating in a lot of the tournaments and cultural activities and talking to young people and talking to the northern mayors — they want to make sure that those people all have the ability to vote, Mr. Speaker, and therefore want to have the disenfranchised be able to engage in the voting process in the next election, Mr. Speaker.

So one wonders if the Sask Party minister for that portfolio, or others in the Sask Party government, have been speaking to First Nations and Métis people to ensure that their voices are being heard and they are in favour of Bill 162. Because I'm hearing from one member that, you know, that it's absolutely. But, Mr. Speaker, that's contrary to what our northern members are saying. That's also contrary to what other members in my caucus are saying from what contact they are having from First Nations and Métis people across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Now it's not just First Nations and Métis people in the North, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you, there are a number of First Nations and Métis people in the area of southern Saskatchewan that have contacted me and that have contacted other members of the NDP opposition and are saying the same thing: that this is not fair, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, First Nations people are having difficulty in accessing voting situations to begin with if there isn't a polling station on their reserve, Mr. Speaker. And now we're going to make it even more difficult by making sure that they have to jump through all these hoops in terms of having the proper identification that the Sask Party government is now laying out with respect to voter ID, photo identification, Mr. Speaker. So instead of being more inclusive in the voting process, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government is making it more difficult, Mr. Speaker.

And one has to wonder why any government who claims, who claims that they are the government of the people — because that's what the Sask Party government likes to tout, that they, you know, that they're listening to people; they're going around the province — that they don't need to have public policy documents, Mr. Speaker, at their convention which just took place last weekend, Mr. Speaker.

There were two visitors at the Sask Party convention, Mr. Speaker, who were very fortunate visitors, Mr. Speaker, because with respect to Bill 162, they got to see some of what happens at the Sask Party convention first-hand. So you know, they got to see what Bill 162 would actually affect in terms of the voting mentality, Mr. Speaker. Because when they attended, these two people attended the Sask Party convention, they noted that everyone was given either a white name tag, a blue name tag, or a red name tag. And these two visitors, Mr. Speaker, these two visitors were given orange name tags. Interestingly enough, these were the only two people at the entire Sask Party convention that were given orange name tags, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, when you look at Bill 162 and being, you know, open, accountable, and willing to listen to the people of the province, singling out two individuals who are visiting the Sask Party convention with orange name tags — I found that rather amusing, Mr. Speaker. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if we have green and yellow name tags for visitors at the NDP convention. Never saw it before, but we'll have to wait and see on that one.

So, Mr. Speaker, with respect to Bill 162, we can see that the Sask Party government is making it harder for people to exercise their democratic right to free speech and hold protests as well, Mr. Speaker. So those people who want to speak against the Sask Party government policies and those people

that want to hold protest rallies, Mr. Speaker, those will probably be people who would want to engage in the voting process as well, Mr. Speaker. So again, Mr. Speaker, are these people that are likely to vote for a government that they're holding a protest rally about or that they are going to publicly speak about in a negative fashion, Mr. Speaker? Not likely. So does the Sask Party government care whether or not these are the voters that are going to be disenfranchised by Bill 162? I think not, Mr. Speaker. I think not.

So we can see that despite the fact that the Sask Party government at its annual convention had no public policy document and that the NDP at its convention coming up is going to have a document that is . . . Perhaps one of my colleagues can tell me the number of pages but I believe it's a 77- or 66-page document. Or anyway somewhere around the 70-page document mark, which was through extensive consultations with people across the province and not just with people from within the party, Mr. Speaker. It was inviting consultations and input from people in all areas of expertise. Anyone that wanted to write in, anyone that wanted to submit something online, anyone that wanted to provide something to any member of the NDP or the committee was welcome to do so, Mr. Speaker.

And all of that information was collated into this document which is, as I said, a 70-page document of policy ideas for the NDP going forward which, in contrast to the Sask Party convention which had no policy document, which to me speaks like it's completely devoid of ideas, is rather concerning, Mr. Speaker.

And then we hear the comment from the Premier of Saskatchewan when he hears about the 70-page document. What is his comment, Mr. Speaker? His comment is that, you know, that the document is plain crazy. Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't see it that way. We see the input from Saskatchewan people to be valuable, to be something that should be taken seriously. So Bill 162 is very important in terms of making sure that people have the ability to vote and the right to vote. Because, Mr. Speaker, that policy document that the NDP has right now is 70 pages full of discussion points.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you have a Sask Party convention which has no policy documents, which then has really nothing that is stimulating discussion in terms of policy going forward, one can see why there's no vision from the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. One can see why all we see or hear is announcements being made and nothing coming to fruition.

So Bill 162 is incredibly important, Mr. Speaker, in allowing people to exercise their ability to express their opinion in terms of what the Sask Party government is doing and in terms of what the Sask Party government isn't doing. And, Mr. Speaker, what the Sask Party government isn't doing is addressing the real concerns of the people of Saskatchewan in terms of what's affecting them most negatively in their lives right now.

Saskatchewan used to be a province that we called, under the NDP administration, the best place to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker, the best province to live, work, and raise a family. And, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that the NDP is no longer in government, I still believe in my heart that it is the

best place to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker.

But it's more difficult, Mr. Speaker. It's not, it's not as easy to live, work, and raise a family in Saskatchewan now as it was prior to the Sask Party getting elected. Because why? We're seeing an increase in rents, Mr. Speaker. So Bill 162 is incredibly important to those who are seeing those monumental increases in rents, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing more difficulty in finding full-time, meaningful jobs, Mr. Speaker. And when I say meaningful, I'm talking about a living wage job, Mr. Speaker. I'm not talking about a full-time job . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Exactly, not three jobs that equals one job, not one job that is barely meeting the poverty line in terms of their income, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about a full-time job that is meaningful for the people that are working those jobs and that provides them with a living wage, and not just a living wage for one person to be able to survive on, Mr. Speaker, but a living wage that is able to support a family, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party government is allowing that to become more difficult in this province, Mr. Speaker, and is not addressing those needs, is not addressing those concerns. So Bill 162 is incredibly important to those people who feel that they're finding it more difficult to get by, Mr. Speaker, on what they're earning in this province, Mr. Speaker. And in terms of raising a family, Mr. Speaker, that too has become more difficult under the Sask Party government.

Now they'll tout their credit in terms of sport and recreation, or recreation and culture, I should say, but, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't go a long way when people can't afford to put their children into those programs to begin with because they're barely making ends meet in terms of paying the rent or in terms of paying the mortgages because the mortgages have gone up substantially, Mr. Speaker, with the increase in home prices, and, Mr. Speaker, and also the cost of living. We know that the cost of electricity has gone up, the cost of natural gas has gone up, and why is that, Mr. Speaker? Because the Sask Party government, when it got elected, despite the fact that it started seeing record revenue in the province of Saskatchewan, decided to axe, that's right, it cut the lowest cost utility bundle guarantee in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why is it? Why did that happen? Despite the fact that we see now that the Sask Party government has \$4 billion more revenue per year, Mr. Speaker, than the last budget that the NDP had in 2007, \$4 billion more, what does the Sask Party government do as soon as it gets elected? It decides to cut the lowest cost utility bundle guarantee for the people of Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, who did that affect most directly? It affected those with the least means to be able to afford the utilities in this province to begin with, Mr. Speaker. So why is it that the Sask Party government again is not looking after those who need the government to look out for them the most, Mr. Speaker? Why is that happening?

Those people are having the most difficulty in terms of making ends meet. That's why we're seeing food bank usage up dramatically, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we're seeing those families not have the ability to put their children in those precious recreation programs that those children need to further their enhancement for their growth, Mr. Speaker. So that lovely

credit that they love to tout on the Sask Party side does no good for those families who can't afford to put their children into those programs to begin with, Mr. Speaker.

So when we talk about the best place to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker, it has become dramatically more difficult under the Sask Party government to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker, dramatically more difficult.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with reference to Bill 162, there's another group that I want to refer to specifically, and that is the Catholic school students in the province of Saskatchewan. The Catholic school students in the province of Saskatchewan are dramatically underfunded, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of millions and millions and millions of dollars — millions and millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. My Education critic isn't here at the moment, but I believe it's somewhere in the amount of \$70 million that they're underfunded compared to the public school systems in the province of Saskatchewan.

In Regina alone, in Regina alone, the Catholic school students are underfunded \$2.7 million compared to the public schools in Regina alone. That amounts to \$275 per student in the Catholic school system is underfunded compared to a student in the public school system. Now let's ask when that change happened, and why that change happened.

Now that change happened last year under the Sask Party government. Now why did that change happen? Because the Sask Party government, in its wisdom, decided to change the funding formula, Mr. Speaker. They decided to change the funding formula. But what did they fail to do? They failed to make sure that the Sask Party government was properly addressing an equal way of addressing the funding formula for all students of this province.

[15:30]

So with respect to Bill 162, there is a group that is deeply disenfranchised, Mr. Speaker, deeply disenfranchised. When you see students in the city of Regina underfunded to the tune of \$275 compared to the public school that's next door, to each student that's in the public school next door, Mr. Speaker, and you're talking about a student population, for instance in my daughter's school, of 425 students — do the math, Mr. Speaker. That is a significant amount of money that my daughter's school could be using to further . . . for programs, for extra teachers or extra equipment or whatever it may be, Mr. Speaker. And it's unfair, Mr. Speaker.

And the Sask Party government last year, what did they do about it when representatives from the Catholic school division came to the legislature and sat in your gallery, Mr. Speaker? What did the Sask Party government do? They actually gnashed their teeth. In other words, they actually bared their teeth at those people and were angry with them for . . . How dare they show up in the legislature, Mr. Speaker? That's what they did to them.

They sat in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, to represent the people that they are supposed to be representing, which are the Catholic school students in the city of Regina. Those Regina Catholic School Division representatives, they were here to

represent their students, the Regina Catholic school students, and the Sask Party government dared to look at them in an angry fashion and directly addressed them in an angry way when they were responding to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, or whoever was delivering those questions. That's what the Sask Party government did. So heaven forbid somebody criticizes what the Sask Party government does because they're going to get the wrath of the Sask Party government directly in the legislature when they come and visit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Bill 162 is of great concern to that group of individuals. Why? Because they felt threatened, Mr. Speaker. They felt threatened. And not for their personal safety, Mr. Speaker, that's not the threat that I'm talking about. But they felt threatened in terms of how they wanted to raise the concerns of the people that they're supposed to represent, which is the students in the Regina Catholic School Division, and yet they were being threatened by the minister of Education at the time for doing so, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely pathetic. So, Mr. Speaker, they're concerned about Bill 162 as well, Mr. Speaker. So Bill 162 is incredibly important to that group of individuals, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government also talks about that renters for example, you know, won't have a problem because they can present their identification. But again we talked about the fact that renters are also having to move frequently, Mr. Speaker. Because of increasing rents, Mr. Speaker, renters are not able to stay in a particular building for any long period of time, Mr. Speaker, because they can't afford the rent. So then they have to find alternative rental housing or rental apartments because they can't afford to stay in the unit that they're in because their rent is increasing to a point where they can no longer pay. So, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing that even for those individuals it's becoming difficult because they're having to change their addresses frequently due to the high cost of rent.

And then they talk about the fact that they're going to have people who are . . . Or let's talk about, for instance, the people who are couch surfing. So in large part, Mr. Speaker, students who can't afford rent are now resorting to the term called couch surfing which means that they'll go from place to place to place to be able to find accommodations to stay because they can't afford the rent or they're trying to gather up enough money to be able to pay rent for at least a few months. So they're couch surfing in various homes to be able to do so.

Or it's people who simply can't afford the rent and fall through all the cracks in terms of being able to find any support systems, Mr. Speaker. So those people are couch surfing as well. And again they don't have any documentation. They don't have a fixed address. And they certainly don't have the means to pay the \$10 to purchase the photo ID. Because if they have \$10 in their pocket, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be spent on something like, you know, bread, milk, and the staples that they need to be able to survive. And also these are why the numbers at the food bank are increasing, Mr. Speaker.

Now what's interesting about all this, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken on this, on Bill 162, for a while now and talked about all the people who are disenfranchised. I've talked about all the difficulties that can be, that will be incurred with Bill 162

passing, Mr. Speaker. So what I've found very interesting is that the government, the Sask Party government, is making it harder for certain groups of people to vote. But they've shown absolutely no leadership, no leadership whatsoever in trying to make it easier for people to vote, Mr. Speaker.

And we wonder why that is the case, Mr. Speaker. We wonder why there's no discussion of how new technology can make it easier for people to vote online, for instance. Those are things that should be examined, could be examined. We don't hear the Sask Party government talking about the fact that this is something that they're undertaking. All we hear about from the Sask Party government is, we're going to make it more difficult for people to vote. And we hear no other initiatives at all, Mr. Speaker.

So again the NDP opposition does understand why the Sask Party government is not interested in making things easier to vote, for people to vote, but rather making it more difficult for people to vote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the move . . . There has also been a request to move to four-year terms, and that came from the municipal sector. And that's been endorsed by both SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and SARM. Now the opposition supports this change, Mr. Speaker, because we've also heard from SUMA and SARM, and we know that these were desired changes by these organizations and the municipalities that they represent. Now this would allow people who serve in elected office at the municipal level more time to build up expertise and experience, something which would, should benefit their constituents and improve the quality of government at the local level, Mr. Speaker. So we are definitely not opposed to that at all.

But what we are concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is how the change happened. Because when we, the opposition, asked the government about the issue two years ago, the government said that they weren't going to proceed with the changes at that time because some people had expressed opposition to the change. So we'd like to know what the reason . . . why some people were opposed to the change because, you know, that's important information to have, Mr. Speaker, and what did the government learn in its subsequent consultations that persuaded them to change the government's mind obviously, Mr. Speaker. So we would be interested in knowing those things.

So there's still a number of questions that we'd like to have answered with respect to Bill 162 that are still out there, Mr. Speaker. And we're also pleased to see provisions in a Bill that would allow for greater use of other methods of voting because, Mr. Speaker, this is an acknowledgement at least that a discussion needs to happen, unlike the changes the government has proposed to make to the provincial elections Act. But that discussion needs to move further and be more broad ranging, Mr. Speaker.

Now another one of the changes that needs to be considered includes a review of the hours that polls in rural municipalities remain open, Mr. Speaker. Because people in rural municipalities, a lot of them will work in large urban centres or smaller urban centres and then they go, you know, after work they go back to their municipalities because they live in those

smaller municipalities — that's where they reside, Mr. Speaker. But if the voting hours are not long enough, Mr. Speaker, for them to be able to accommodate the travel time that it takes, Mr. Speaker, again it could be a potential situation where they're not able to exercise their right to vote because of the hours that those polls are open, Mr. Speaker.

So again this is something that should be open for discussion and that the Sask Party government should be willing to look into and take into account and again would be more inclusive in terms of inviting people to vote and increasing the voter numbers, Mr. Speaker. Because as I've said, the percentage of voters in municipal, provincial, and federal elections continually drops, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that this is a great concern to the NDP opposition. And surely to goodness this has to be a concern to the Sask Party government unless they're quite content with the current people that are making it out to vote and they don't care about including more voters which, quite frankly, the most disenfranchised groups are the ones that I've listed, are the seniors and the students who the Sask Party government obviously doesn't take great interest in because those are also the ones that are being hardest hit by the lack of policies or the policies that the Sask Party government has put forward so far since it has come into government, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government says that it has consulted with the municipal sector regarding the Bill. But given the opposition we're hearing from across the province to the photo ID provisions from this Bill, it's obvious to us, Mr. Speaker, that they did not consult with people about that, Mr. Speaker. Now it's a curious admission coming from a government that held up the change to four-year terms over two years because they wanted to consult with the public. So where was the public consultation on photo IDs, Mr. Speaker? That's what everyone is asking. Where was the public consultation on making it more difficult for people in this province to vote, Mr. Speaker?

I'm absolutely shocked that the Sask Party government doesn't think that this is something that is of great importance in terms of needing to properly address and making sure that all the voices of the people of Saskatchewan are heard on the subject, Mr. Speaker, because there was no public consultation.

And now of course we're hearing the fallout from that, Mr. Speaker. We're hearing numerous groups — the ones I've listed and others — who are saying this doesn't make sense. Why is it, when the voter turnout is so low, why is it that we're going to look at implementing provisions . . . Why is the Sask Party looking at implementing provisions that are going to make it more difficult for people to vote? Why are they wanting to depress the voter numbers even further, Mr. Speaker, and not be encouraging of people to vote, Mr. Speaker? That just doesn't make sense.

So, Mr. Speaker, again let's recap with respect to Bill 162. The groups that are very, very much affected and are going to be affected by the Sask Party government in terms of its lack of policies or the policies it's decided to put through, which are seniors, students, First Nation and Métis people, homeless people, people who see funding inequities such as people within the Catholic school divisions in the province of Saskatchewan,

people who are disenfranchised for various reasons in terms of what's not taking place in the province, renters, Mr. Speaker, people who are, you know, supporting people in various groups, or walks of life I should say, who know the difficulties that those people are meeting.

I even walk into my bank, Mr. Speaker, and I hear from the people that work in my bank who are saying to me about the young couples that are walking into the bank and who are absolutely devastated and mortified because they can't afford a mortgage that they need to be able to buy a starter home because starter homes are so expensive, yet they can't afford the rent in the residence that they're living in at the time. And you know, I've got people in my bank that are saying, like when is this all going to end or where does this go from here and what do we do and what do we do for young people? Or I have people saying to me, what's going to happen with my children when they eventually want to move out of the house? Well they're saying their children are likely not ever going to be able to move out of their house because they can't afford to move out.

Or you know, I hear the minister for . . . Minister for Immigration, I think. I can't remember what he's the minister for any more, quite frankly. But . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — It speaks volumes that you can't.

**Ms. Morin:** — Well you know, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately he hasn't made a great impression in the legislature so far, so it's hard to keep track of these new assignments. And unfortunately the responses that we've gotten from the ones that have been asked questions so far haven't been much more helpful in terms of addressing what portfolios they're responsible for.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member chirps that perhaps, you know, that there's some that have to leave the province. Well, Mr. Speaker, you know that is something that the Sask Party criticized when they were in opposition was the fact that people were leaving the province to find jobs or adventure or what it was, Mr. Speaker. So now apparently the Sask Party government is quite content with those people leaving the province because they can't afford to live here, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand that mentality. That doesn't make any sense to me.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, one would think that if they're wanting to attract people to this province, that they'd also want to keep people that would like to stay in this province and would give them the opportunity to do so by having affordable mortgages or having the ability to access mortgages or the ability to pay their rent for instance, Mr. Speaker, or the ability to pay their tuition, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

So you know, when we see the lack of programs that are being addressed by the Sask Party government like for instance, you know, graduate retention programs or programs to help with tuition or for instance the lowest cost utility bundle, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that they're quite content now to see people needing to leave the province because they can't afford to stay here any more, Mr. Speaker. So the whole notion of it

being the best province to live, work, and raise a family seems to be lost on the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker.

So Bill 162 is critical to those people, Mr. Speaker, because those people will want to have the ability to have their say in the next election. Those people will want to ensure that they have the ability to access their right to vote, Mr. Speaker. So Bill 162 is something that the Sask Party government, like many other Bills that they've introduced, haven't thought through very well, Mr. Speaker, because obviously there's much opposition to Bill 162. So they haven't thought it through, and they haven't properly consulted the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you're not going to properly think through a Bill to ensure that it's something that will be advantageous to the people of Saskatchewan, you'd at least want to hold public consultations to ensure that the public knows about what's happening and has the ability to give some input, Mr. Speaker. You'd at least want to do that. But did the Sask Party government do that? No. Like on so many other fronts, the Sask Party government didn't do any consultations on Bill 162 with respect to making it more difficult for people to vote, Mr. Speaker.

So one really has to wonder what the motivations are. And as I've laid out, is it the fact that they don't want the people who want to vote for the Progressive Conservative Party to be able to exercise their vote because they can't access their \$3 million fund? Or is it the fact that Bill 162 is going to hinder the vote of those who are not happy with the Sask Party government for not creating an equitable funding formula for the Catholic school systems and the public school systems in the province, Mr. Speaker? Or is it that they don't care that Bill 162 is going to make it more difficult to vote for the seniors in this province, Mr. Speaker? Or is it that they don't care that Bill 162 is going to make it more difficult for the students of this province to vote, Mr. Speaker? Or is it that they don't care that Bill 162 is going to make it more difficult for the students in this province to vote, Mr. Speaker? Or is it that they don't care that Bill 162 is going to make it more difficult to vote for the homeless people in the province, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, there is so much logic and reason on the side of the people who are seeing grave concerns with Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition has tremendous difficulty understanding why the Sask Party government would want to bulldoze this Bill through, Mr. Speaker. We don't understand that. We don't understand why the Sask Party government is not willing to pull the Bill, do some more homework on the Bill, do the necessary consultations on the Bill or even just say, you know what? It was a bad idea; we should just leave things the way they are and improve things instead of making things more difficult, Mr. Speaker. Or, Mr. Speaker, why is it that they would not want to look at . . .

[Interjections]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw):** — I'm having a hard time hearing the debate here on Bill 162. So if everybody wants to talk, if they would please go behind the bar and do so. It's getting very difficult for me to hear. Continue.

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I came into this session with laryngitis, but it seems to be holding up pretty well despite the fact that there is some interesting challenges, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, like I said, there is many, many, many questions that people in the province have. There are many, many questions that the opposition has with respect to Bill 162 and obviously a lot of legitimate concerns. And yet despite those legitimate concerns, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government is not giving any inkling of wanting to change the Bill or wanting to do more review on the Bill by pulling it back or wanting to just say, you know what? We should just pull the Bill altogether, do some public consultations on what we can do, actually facilitate making the voting process easier in the province of Saskatchewan or even, Mr. Speaker, just looking at what happens with the Supreme Court challenge in the British Columbia with respect to the identical notion that this Bill is wanting to put forward, Mr. Speaker.

Because the groups that would be challenging Bill 162 in the province, Mr. Speaker, are the same groups that are challenging Bill 162 in the province of British Columbia. And I repeat: it's a coalition of organizations including people with disabilities, seniors, renters, and people who are homeless, Mr. Speaker. And those are the same people plus many more, as I've spoken about, who are saying that Bill 162 is going to be a detriment to increasing the voter percentages in the provincial election in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So one would wonder why the government would want to proceed with a Bill that has clearly got so many problems and has clearly disenfranchised so many people. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, that can also backfire for the Sask Party government. Who knows? If people become angry enough, a disenfranchised voter is someone who is likely not to vote, Mr. Speaker. But someone who is angry with the government is likely going to find ways to be able to vote, Mr. Speaker. And there are agencies now that are looking at potential ways to assist those disenfranchised individuals with assisting them in being able to get to the polls.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that shouldn't have to happen. Each individual should be able to access the right to vote simply because we do live in a free and democratic society, Mr. Speaker. We do have the right to vote. So Bill 162 should not be hindering that free and democratic right to vote in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Bill 162 is doing just that. It is not making access to voting easier or more convenient. Instead it's doing the opposite. It's causing people to have difficulty in terms of accessing the photo ID that the Sask Party government is now wanting to implement.

And we just don't see the necessity of it, Mr. Speaker. We haven't seen any evidence from the Sask Party government, or otherwise, as to what's precipitated this change. We haven't heard anything as to why it's necessary. We haven't heard of any problems. We haven't heard of any difficulties, Mr. Speaker. All we know is that this Bill came forward without any consultation with the public and they're going to ram it through regardless of whether there is opposition to it from the public of Saskatchewan or not — which is not unlike what we've seen on other Bills, Mr. Speaker. We've seen many other

Bills that have been rammed through by the Sask Party government without proper consultation. And we've seen other Bills that have been rammed through whether or not they were good for the Saskatchewan public or good for Saskatchewan, period.

One only has to look back to the spring session of the last year with respect to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker, where there were no public consultations. They simply stripped, they simply stripped 3.5 million acres of habitat land that was protected under legislation, which was put under legislation, Mr. Speaker, by the former Progressive Conservative government under Grant Devine. It was Colin Maxwell, Minister Colin Maxwell at the time, that put that land under legislation and started protecting it. The NDP added to it.

So Bill 162 would be something . . . is something of great concern, I should say, to those individuals that have great concern about what's going to happen with those lands now, given that they're no longer protected under legislation, Mr. Speaker. They are at the discretion of the Minister of Environment to be able to sell at his whim, Mr. Speaker.

And the excuse that the minister uses about the fact that there is a conservation easements amendment Act that was also passed — which means that conservation easements can be attached — is of cold comfort, Mr. Speaker, because the minister also has the discretion to remove those easements. So Bill 162 is incredibly important to those individuals who are very concerned about what's going to happen with that land in the future.

Because, Mr. Speaker, there's something very nefarious going on with the Sask Party government with respect to the wildlife habitat lands, Mr. Speaker. We haven't seen . . . Well we saw an incredible push . . .

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw):** — I know there's lots of leniency and latitude on discussion of the various different Bills, but I fail to see where this has anything to do with the environment. And could the member please stick to Bill 162.

**Ms. Morin:** — Well with respect to Bill 162, the people who are concerned about the environment, Mr. Speaker, and the people who are directly concerned about the wildlife habitat protection, the protected lands that were protected under legislation, will have a great deal of concern about Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, because Bill 162 could directly affect the people that would like to vote in the next election with respect to exercising their voice on what happened under the Sask Party government, by stripping those lands, those 3.5 million acres of lands that were protected for the wildlife habitat of this province and putting them out of legislation into regulations, Mr. Speaker. So Bill 162 has direct impact on those individuals who would like to exercise their right to vote about what the Sask Party did with respect to the wildlife habitat protection land.

Let's not even talk about what's happening with consultation. I mean, Mr. Speaker, on Bill 162 we can clearly see that there was not enough consultation done on a public level or we wouldn't be seeing the amount of outcry on Bill 162 that we are with respect to the amount of people who are disenfranchised or disappointed, I should say, with Bill 162.



With the wildlife habitat protected lands, we were told that there was widespread consultations with various organizations. Those organizations were actually named. Six organizations were named. Five of the six organizations said that they weren't consulted with, Mr. Speaker.

So again we see the fact that the Sask Party government is willing to proceed forward on a Bill regardless of whether it's to the detriment of Saskatchewan people or not, as long as it's their mandate, it's their idea. They're going to go forward regardless of whether or not it's to the good or to the detriment of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we're seeing with Bill 162.

Bill 162 does nothing to enhance the ability for people to vote in this province, Mr. Speaker. What it does is it further causes restrictions on people to vote in the province, Mr. Speaker. So there is no reason for Bill 162 to come forward.

We also haven't heard from the Sask Party government, we haven't heard any reasons as to why Bill 162 was necessary to implement in terms of enforcing those restrictions, in terms of making things more difficult to vote, Mr. Speaker. We've not yet heard from the Sask Party government why Bill 162 was necessary to implement in terms of voter restrictions, in terms of voter ID. We've not yet heard why, and yet the Sask Party government is going to proceed forward without explaining to the people of Saskatchewan why it was necessary to implement in this province.

The only thing we've heard is that they want to be like their cousins in Ottawa and they want to have, you know, similar legislation, Mr. Speaker. That's not good enough. That's not good enough. If their cousins in Ottawa put forward bad legislation, does the Sask Party government think that it has to sink to the lowest common denominator of the Harper Tories in Ottawa? Is that what they're saying, Mr. Speaker, because that's what we're hearing. And we're hearing it on numerous fronts, Mr. Speaker.

Not only are we hearing that they now think that they have to mimic the Harper Tories' legislation with respect to voter ID — despite the fact that people of Saskatchewan don't want it; despite the fact that the people of Saskatchewan find that it's going to further cause problems for people to vote in this province, Mr. Speaker — they're following suit on numerous other fronts. Whether it's lowering their targets for greenhouse gas emissions, whether it's meeting other lower targets that the federal government is putting forward, Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Sask Party government always wants to sink to the lowest common denominator with whatever federal conservative cousins or whatever conservative cousins in other provinces they can possibly meet.

It's no different than the New West Partnership Agreement or whatever the heck they're calling it now. Something to the effect of TILMA [Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement], quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party government said that they weren't going to sign on to TILMA. That's what they promised the people of Saskatchewan prior to November 7th, 2007, the last election. And yet what did they do? They signed on to this New West Partnership Agreement, which, Mr. Speaker, mirrors TILMA.

So once again they've promised the people of Saskatchewan they wouldn't sign something on to something that the people of Saskatchewan didn't want. And yet once it gets into government it does whatever it wants.

They promised the workers of the province that they weren't going to implement legislation like under Bills 5 and 6, like essential services legislation and changes to *The Trade Union Act* which now allow the Sask Party government to spend, I would almost hesitate to say but it's probably close to a million or if not more, but thousands and thousands and thousands of taxpayer dollars in terms of negative advertising with respect to negotiations that are going on in this province with SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations]. We're seeing constant negative ads that are paid for by taxpayers of Saskatchewan regardless of whether those taxpayers who are voters under Bill 162 feel that that's what should be going forward, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, Bill 162 has huge impact on the people who are currently seeing the Sask Party government wasting their taxpayer dollars on negative advertising in terms of negotiations that are going on with the workers of this province. And when did that negative advertising start, Mr. Speaker? It started after this government rammed through those two Bills, Bills 5 and 6.

Bill 6 allows them now to do whatever they want, Mr. Speaker, with respect to negative advertising and negotiations. And they say they respect workers. They say they respect workers, Mr. Speaker. What a absolute crock, Mr. Speaker. They have no respect for the workers in this province, whether they're unionized or non-unionized, Mr. Speaker. They have no respect for the workers in this province.

Because if they had respect for the workers in this province, the workers in this province wouldn't feel so strongly about Bill 162. Because the workers in this province are in large part the people who are also complaining about Bill 162, Mr. Speaker. The workers in this province know that this government is anti-worker whether they're unionized or non-unionized.

They are doing nothing to raise the minimum wage in this province, Mr. Speaker. That speaks to the non-unionized workers in this province, Mr. Speaker. They are doing nothing to tell SAHO not to put forward negative ads. As a matter of fact, I suspect those negative ads are being instructed by the Sask Party government to SAHO, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. So that's what the Sask Party government is all about. It's about negative advertising and it's about being anti-worker. And Bill 162 is especially important to the workers of this province, Mr. Speaker, because the workers of this province will have a lot to say in the next election, Mr. Speaker, about how this government is treating them and their lack of respect for the workers in this province, Mr. Speaker, which is interesting because, Mr. Speaker, the province would not be moving forward the way it is if it wasn't for the dedication of the workers in this province, Mr. Speaker. It is at the hands of those workers, it is from the backs of those workers, it is from the families of those workers, supporting those workers to be able to do what they do, to build the province up to be what it is today, Mr. Speaker.

So how dare they show the respect . . . How dare the Sask Party government show the disrespect that they do for the workers of this province, Mr. Speaker? It is absolutely deplorable. And Bill 162 has a great impact on those workers, Mr. Speaker, because again those are the people that are going to want to be able to exercise their right to vote in the next election, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've outlined many different groups that have concerns with this Bill. I've outlined many different groups that are deeply concerned and affected by this Bill, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I've outlined some of the alternatives that the Sask Party government could undertake because again, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the fact that there are changes that could be made to the voting system in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that should be discussed, but this is not the way to go about doing so.

We should be talking about the polling hours, Mr. Speaker. We should be talking about easier access to voting, Mr. Speaker. Those are the discussions that should be taking place, Mr. Speaker. We should be talking about moving forward and engaging more speakers in the province, more voters in the province, Mr. Speaker, and not talking about how we're going to further make it difficult for the people in the province to exercise their right to vote, Mr. Speaker.

And that's what the Sask Party government is all about. They just don't care about the individuals that are going to see the most harm from Bill 162. They just don't care about the individuals who see the most harm from cancelling the lowest cost utility bundle in this province, Mr. Speaker. They just don't care about the individuals who really need some system of rent control and are not going to see it from a Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. They just don't care about the people that are hardest hit by the rising cost of living in the province, Mr. Speaker. That's not who they care about, and those are the individuals that are hardest hit by Bill 162 and those are the people that have the most stake in Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, in terms of being able to exercise their right to vote.

So unlike the government, the opposition intends to consult more widely on this Bill, despite the fact that we've already received many, many, many letters and emails and phone calls with respect to this Bill, and particularly the requirement to produce ID.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to allow the other members of my caucus to be able to engage in the debate as well and exercise their opinions and their voices, plus exercise the opinions and voices of those that they're hearing from as well, Mr. Speaker, because I know that I mean clearly if I'm getting the amount of feedback that I'm getting, that my colleagues are getting the equal amount of feedback.

And what's more shameful about that, Mr. Speaker, is that the Sask Party caucus, the Sask Party government is getting as much feedback on the issue, negative feedback on the issue as we are, and yet you don't hear them saying, gee we made a mistake or we should pull back the Bill for a while; we should make some changes. No, Mr. Speaker, they're saying, we're going full steam ahead, just like they always do regardless of if it's correct or not. They're going full steam ahead with the Bill whether or not it's going to be good for the public of

Saskatchewan or not, and the NDP opposition feels quite differently. We've put forward a few suggestions, and I hope the Sask Party government will heed those suggestions. So at this time I'm going to adjourn debate. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw):** — The member from Regina Walsh Acres has moved adjournment on debate on Bill 162. Is the Assembly ready to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw):** — 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw):** — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

**Mr. Furber:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm indeed pleased to have the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill No. 160. This Bill is of vast importance, of great importance, for a number of individuals in Saskatchewan. And again it's a Bill that speaks to fundamental changes that will affect, in many cases, the most vulnerable citizens of the province of Saskatchewan.

The original intent of the tribunals that were set up in Saskatchewan that are being changed in this legislation and through this legislation was to hear complaints that are referred by the Human Rights Commission. And they are complaints of people who are discriminated against and people who feel that they are discriminated against based on a number of different criteria or for a number of different reasons, and those may be race, colour, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, marital status, family status, place of origin, or ancestry. So it's a very wide range of concerns that might be brought forward to the Human Rights Commission and formerly brought to a tribunal.

Now originally tribunals were set up as a way for marginalized people to bring forward concerns that they have, whether it's in the workplace, whether it is in relation to their tenancy, employment advertisements, whether it's related to publications, public services and facilities, the purchase of property, and discrimination by unions or associations.

Now tribunals were set up as a less formal function of government in order to hear these complaints because they're less intimidating places to hear cases. And for the people who are bringing forward a complaint, as the Speaker might well know, a court of law can be an intimidating place for people. It can be intimidating for a number of reasons, but it's a very formal and intimidating place. These tribunals that were acting on behalf of Saskatchewan people were much less formal and much more accessible than what is being proposed in this legislation.

Now there have been some concerns expressed previously

about the time it takes for a tribunal to go through to hear a case, and certainly we agree that people are entitled to a timely resolution when they raise concerns with respect to any reason that they're discriminated against. They might have legitimate concerns about the timing. But I'm not sure that this legislation can guarantee anybody that the timeliness will be any better when the newly proposed changes are made. I think it says in the legislation that they'll be limited to a year, but there's no guarantee of that in the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Now certainly you would want to have a timely resolution to these issues, particularly when the issues might involve something that's deeply personal, emotional. And if you look at the list that I'd read earlier — race, colour, age, physical or mental disability, religion, marital status — these items go to the core of who we are as human beings. So they can be very emotional and personal situations, so you want to have a timely and quick resolution.

Now we are discussing at second reading here some of the proposed changes, and I want to note for the people of Saskatchewan some of the comments that were made by the minister responsible, the Minister of Justice, in his speech on November 30th of 2010 because he says this, Mr. Speaker:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [I'm quoting.] I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 160, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*. Mr. Speaker, earlier this session we introduced a Bill dealing with the Provincial Court. The members opposite during their comments on that made significant reference to the fact that the second reading speech was short and was going to require them to do some additional work.

Mr. Speaker, while I thought at the time that the information was provided was more than adequate — and I still believe that — I have today provided some significant additional information with regard to this Bill, so I will be somewhat lengthier in time than we were on the earlier Bill. But that is directly in response to the members opposite inquiries as to the things [we should include] ... in a second reading speech, so we will provide some more significant detail.

So in legislation that makes fundamental changes to a person's human rights and cases where their human rights might be stripped away, the minister is complaining about having to be more forthcoming with information on the Bill. It's astounding, and I hope the irony isn't lost on Saskatchewan people. But that's what we have here. That's how he started his speech in order to provide some more information that's being asked for by the opposition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents who have appealed to us to get more information for them because this directly affects their daily lives.

Now again it's ironic that you have the Justice minister in the province of Saskatchewan belabouring, bemoaning the fact that he has to provide more information to the legislature on a Bill he's introducing that changes fundamental rights for people who have a complaint.

Now we do have so many concerns about this legislation, and they are lengthy to list but interesting to note. Now I'll quote

again from November 30th speech of the minister where he says that "moving the duties of the tribunal to the court should not impact the accessibility of hearings to members of the public given the Queen's Bench courthouse locations across the province."

So he has great concern seemingly about people who want to witness the court proceedings. But I would argue that he should have equal concern about the accessibility of complainants because there is a possibility that this legislation makes fundamental changes that cause individuals to not bring forward cases. And I would say that because it is unclear in this legislation that is proposed whether or not there will be a cost associated for individuals who are bringing forward a complaint.

Again these are complaints that are fundamental to who we are as human beings, related to race, colour, mental or physical disability, marital status, family status, religion. These can be fundamental items that people bring forward complaints regarding. And so it's again fundamentally important that the people who bring these complaints forward are able to do so freely and openly and are not hindered in any way by a financial constraint that is placed on them because there were no such financial constraints previous to this legislation being introduced.

[16:15]

Again in the Minister of Justice's speech on November 30th, he states:

The Bill moves the cost provisions to the Code and places a limit on costs that may be awarded to situations where there has been vexatious, frivolous, or abusive conduct on the part of any party to the proceeding, including if appropriate, the commission itself. Limiting costs will preserve accessibility to human rights hearings.

Limiting costs to the hearings. So that means now implicitly that there's going to be some sort of cost for individuals who bring forward a complaint. I would argue that that is wholly and entirely inappropriate for these types of complaints for people who have been in some way marginalized by another individual or a workplace, one of the groups that I had listed earlier. There's going to be a cost for the hearing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it says nothing of an appeal process. It says nothing of an appeal process at all because if they are able to, as the minister says, limit costs for the hearings, we're not sure what those costs will be limited to. But it says nothing of the appeal process and where the costs might be borne there and who might have to bear those costs. And so we have great concerns for people in the province of Saskatchewan who are bringing forward a complaint who may have to bear the cost of bringing for the complaint where they did not have to previously. And there is nothing specific at all, no reference at all to the potential cost of an appeal in this case.

And so again highly disconcerting, and we've heard from many people throughout the province who are frustrated by this — whether it's a lack of oversight, whether it's intentional on behalf of the government to omit or to have the cost be part of

the process now. Because again there was no cost in previously in the province of Saskatchewan to bring forward one of these complaints, and that was true right up to the highest court in the country. The costs were covered for these cases and these complaints.

So again I want to quote, if I could, from another page in *Hansard* where the Chief Commissioner, Judge Arnot, has spoken with respect to his desire to decrease the amount of time it takes to hear somebody's complaint and that he says that, quote, "... a decision making process which is informal and accessible to all, provides for review of decisions, and is handled by experts who reflect our diverse society."

Now this is a laudable goal. We certainly agree with it. All of these things have to take place in a timely manner, however. And so we've heard many, many different complaints from different individuals throughout Saskatchewan about the proposed legislation. We've heard from professionals. We've heard from people who have brought complaints previously. We've heard from various groups throughout the province that aid people in making complaints in these situations, and we've also heard very recently from the Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada.

Now unfortunately this government's track record with worldly organizations such as Amnesty International, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], the UN [United Nations] is not good because the UN, a group of the UN, spoke out against the government on Bills 5 and 6 about the complete lack of consultation on those Bills. They spoke out very strongly. And what was the government's reaction to that international body? Their reaction was to dismiss it, to say, well they're quasi-judicial at best. They don't have any standing here in Saskatchewan, so we can ignore them because it doesn't mean anything. So to this government, the voice of the United Nations is unfortunately meaningless.

Now there is another group that wants to talk about legislation being brought forward by this government. And it is the group called Amnesty International Canada. Their Secretary-General, Alex Neve, spoke in Saskatoon on March 2nd, so very recently spoke, and he gave a lengthy speech about the perils of what is being proposed here by the Sask Party government. And I want to, if I could, quote at good length from his speech, from his remarks, because I think that it's important to put on the record for Saskatchewan people again.

He says this, and I quote, "... I remain struck by the fact that many people active in the Saskatchewan human rights movement are concerned about deficient consultations." Now that's in respect to Bill 160, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to say:

They talk to me of two main concerns. First, I'm told that the consultation was not an open-ended consultation seeking views about the state of human rights protection in the province and ideas for changes to the system; out of which a reform proposal could then have been developed. Rather, it was a consultation in which people were asked to react and respond to a proposal that had already been developed. Second, many have expressed concern to me that the consultations focused mainly on the four pillars and gave much less attention to the more controversial

proposal related to the future of the human rights tribunal.

So what he is saying here is that while the government, just like they did with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, are stating that they've consulted with a number of groups ... Now I remember having read for the record in this Assembly, the minister at that time, her remarks from her second reading speech where she quoted directly the groups with whom she had said she had consulted. And it turns out after the opposition consulted with these groups — and consulting is where you actually communicate with the groups — we learned that the vast majority of those groups had not taken place in any consultation whatsoever. So when it comes to consultation, I have some concerns. And so, apparently, does the Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada.

Now he makes recommendations, which I think are again important to read into the record, and I'll quote:

I'll start with my first recommendation, which is twofold.

It would be helpful for the Commission or the government to provide more details about the consultation process, including when and where it took place, who was involved and the nature of the consultation meetings. It would also be helpful to be more specific about the basis for asserting that support for Bill 160 is 'overwhelming.'

So, Mr. Speaker, the Secretary-General echoes the concerns that we've been hearing from Saskatchewan people, and they are identical to the concerns that were heard with respect to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. And that is quite simply that the consultation that's being touted, that's being explained by the government in the way they describe it, has not taken place. They list groups that they consulted with but they don't tell you when, where, or how they consulted. And that is of concern both to the opposition, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, and now to the organization Amnesty International Canada.

So again, I'll go on to list the recommendations of the Secretary-General:

I would suggest ... that it is also necessary to go back to the drawing board to a large extent and initiate a further consultation exercise. Consultation never hurts; especially when something as basic as people's human rights are on the line.

So he says quite simply, Mr. Speaker, that he expects that the government will move back to consultations. And so when we brought forward this case, again in legislation, previously when we heard in a second reading speech that consultations had taken place, we made some phone calls to the organizations listed in the speech. They denied flatly that there had been any consultation whatsoever.

What was the response of the government at that time to a call for consultation after we learned that there had been none? Was it then to go out to the broader public? Was it then to actually make phone calls and communicate with these groups that they said they had consulted previously and to do a meaningful and real consultation and to get the input of Saskatchewan people for their legislation?

One would hope that that would be the reaction of the government, but it wasn't, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't at all. They chose instead to bunker themselves in, to not talk to anybody further about the legislation, and just to try to pass it as quickly as they could. And so their record for consulting, even after they've been caught in not consulting when they said they had, is not good. And so I have some concerns along with the Secretary-General that these consultations might not take place on something, Mr. Speaker, on something as fundamental as our human rights — basic, fundamental human rights. This is about who we are as people.

So again I'll continue quoting from the remarks. He says:

Let me now turn more specifically to the actual reform proposal that lies before us. I am an activist and we are always best known for our criticism and complaints. But that is not where I am going to start. Instead, I want to begin by emphasizing a number of positive aspects.

So this is someone that you would want to consult with, Mr. Speaker. Open-minded, not criticizing just for the sake of criticizing, but giving credit where credit is due to the government.

First, I welcome the Four Pillars that are described as forming the basis to the reforms:

More efficient and effective in investigation, prosecution and gate keeping for complaints of discrimination.

Increased focus on early resolution using mediation, collaboration, talking circles and other forms of alternative dispute resolution.

So again, Mr. Speaker, giving credit to some of the good things that might come out of this legislation.

Increased systemic advocacy for issues that affect multiple persons or groups.

Development of pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 civics materials and content that teach citizenship rights, responsibilities and respect in all Saskatchewan schools. I trust that goes alongside continuing support for and, I would expect, efforts to strengthen the curriculum when it comes to human rights education more broadly. It is fundamental that our schools play a lead role in educating our youth both about their responsibility to uphold and respect rights, but also to empower them with a full knowledge of their rights and means of protecting them.

So again, Mr. Speaker, credit where credit is due for what the legislation is attempting to accomplish. And as I had said in my earlier remarks, we are certainly as an opposition welcoming of the possibility that this might speed the process for the affected folks. The education piece is also very important for Saskatchewan people, and so we should give credit to the government where credit is due.

[16:30]

Additionally there are, however, some more concerns levelled

against the government in the remarks. He goes on to say, quote:

I do have a number of concerns — of course I do, why else would we be together tonight.

First, I am puzzled by the shortening of the limitation period within which human rights complaints can be initiated, from two years to one year. I have a mixed view here, because I see that alongside the change there is an explicit power granted to the Commissioner to allow complaints after the one year bar if he or she feels it is "appropriate in the circumstances to do so."

So in one case they're stripping away the rights of people to begin the complaint process, to begin the process after a year, but they're leaving it up to the discretion of the commissioner. It seems contradictory, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure the purpose it serves to strip away somebody's rights and then install them partially, reinstall them partially in the same legislation. I would argue that the time period should be left open to two years as has been the case.

Now the Secretary-General goes on to say:

But why the shorter limitation period? Is there empirical evidence of a substantial number of unfounded complaints being launched during that second year? I have not seen any indication of that, so do not understand what the change seeks to address.

So he's saying quite simply that the government is somehow limiting the amount of time an individual has to bring a complaint forward, and they're doing it in a way that is, in his view, arbitrary because they seem to be limiting something that has not been a problem previously. And so I'll continue:

There are any number of reasons why it may take time for a complainant to come forward and launch a complaint: including fear, shame, lack of awareness, lack of assistance or lack of trust. All of these concerns, particularly absent any compelling evidence of abuse, point to maintaining the limitation period as it is — two years.

And so again, Mr. Speaker, when you're talking about something, when you're talking about fundamental human rights, when you're talking about the things that are fundamental to each of us — our race, our colour, our religion, our sexual orientation — there can be a number of reasons why it would take time for a person to bring a complaint forward. So again it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to strip away the rights of people to bring forward a complaint after a year.

Now the Secretary-General goes on to state:

Second, it seems that there are two new grounds which could form the basis for a decision by the Commissioner to dismiss a complaint outright. Both of which cause concern.

The first is related to mediation. In an effort to bolster the successful completion rate of mediation, the Act provides

that if a complainant turns down an offer of settlement that the Commissioner considers to be “fair and reasonable” the Commissioner may dismiss the complaint. Notably, while the complainant faces that punitive provision there is no equivalent provision penalizing the individual or group against whom the complaint has been made if they turn down a reasonable offer of settlement.

So the complainant can have a judgment ruled against them. But the person who is defending themselves, or the organization that’s defending themselves, don’t have the same provision. And it seems obviously incongruent because they should be treated equally, you would expect, by the commissioner.

And again, when you’re speaking about fundamental human rights, who we are as people, to have the commissioner be able to decide unilaterally to dismiss the complaint based on what he or she deems is fair causes some concern, especially if it costs a great deal of money to then appeal that decision. We heard earlier that costs may be limited but still occur for people in their original complaint, but there is nothing that I’ve read in the legislation that leads me to believe that once the commissioner dismisses a complaint, that the appeal process is funded in any way.

So are we asking people who are lodging a complaint, somehow possibly marginalized individuals, to then seek out a lawyer, and pay out of their own pocket, which may be extremely difficult for them to pay for an appeal process for a unilateral decision of the commissioner. So certainly there are some concerns — legitimate concerns — raised about that process. Now it says, it goes on to say:

... that one-sided penalty risks creating a ... uneven dynamic in the mediation process ... Also, there is no further indication as to what constitutes a “fair and reasonable” offer of settlement. Fair and reasonable judged against what?

So again, Mr. Speaker, speaks to what I just talked about. When the commissioner has a unilateral opportunity to dismiss a complaint, it certainly seems to be unfair to the complainant that that might take place because there’s nothing that it’s measured against. It’s a simple judgment of fairness by an individual. The Secretary-General goes on to say that:

This power is obviously meant to encourage complainants to engage in the mediation process in good faith and to increase the number of mediations that end in settlement. There is nothing inherently objectionable in that goal — in fact it is a laudable goal. The problem lies in the means of getting there. For there is no denying that the approach here has a decidedly coercive feel to it.

As admirable as it may be to urge, cajole and persuade complainants to settle when the proposal before them is a reasonable one, the bottom line is that human rights that are at stake in the complaint belong to the individual or individuals who have made the complaint, not to the Commission.

To me, Mr. Speaker, an exceedingly important point to make that the unilateral decision of the commissioner would be seen

as dismissing the complaint, which belongs to the individual or individuals who made the complaint originally and not to the commission. If complainants make their own informed decision at the end of a mediation exercise that they do not want to settle and do instead want to have a full hearing of their case, that choice should be respected. That is what human rights are all about. So to take that away by extension means that you’re doing the opposite of what you intended to do in introducing this legislation, that you are stripping away the fundamental human rights of the individual lodging the complaint.

Under the tribunal system, there is always the opportunity to be heard in a public way. This has the potential to urge, cajole, or persuade complainants to settle in a way that they do not want to. And as has been said, this strips away fundamental human rights. And so we ought to be exceedingly careful when we introduce legislation and pass legislation that strip away fundamental human rights — certainly something to be concerned about.

Now I’ll go on to quote, if I could, from the Secretary-General:

The second new ground for dismissal is a fairly vague and general one — allowing the Commissioner to dismiss when “having regard to all the circumstances” the Commissioner is of the view that hearing of the complaint is not warranted.

There’s nothing more than that. Perhaps more is to come in the regulations but, Mr. Speaker, that’s not what we’re discussing here today and we have no way to know that that will take place.

So it’s not bad enough that there’s the threat that if the complainant brings forward a complaint and is offered a settlement in mediation that the commissioner deems is fair and you turn that down — because as an individual who has the perception that you are harmed in some way fundamentally in terms of who you are — that they can dismiss that case, but what it’s saying, what the Secretary-General is saying is that this legislation as it is now, without the regulations before us, suggests that the commissioner can dismiss any case that they believe is not warranted. And so again a fundamental stripping away of human rights for the people of Saskatchewan if they have a complaint, when one individual who hears that complaint can dismiss it outright.

So there are two reasons why it might be dismissed and both decisions can be made unilaterally by a commissioner. And if those decisions are made where the commissioner deems that (1) the settlement was fair and you didn’t agree to take it or (2) that your complaint is not valid to begin with or warranted as the Secretary-General says, that that can be dismissed outright by the commissioner.

So again we ought to be absolutely, fundamentally careful that this is not something that we do in the legislature — the people’s legislature of Saskatchewan — because we are here to enhance the fundamental human rights of the people of Saskatchewan and not to take them away. We were elected to enhance those rights and not to strip them away.

Now again to quote:

Dismissing a human rights complaint is serious business and should only be done on the basis of grounds that are clear and understandable and not open to arbitrariness. This provision should be removed from the Act.

I would argue that that is absolutely reasonable, Mr. Speaker, considering that it is an opportunity to erode the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan people.

He goes on to say that:

My third area of concern, related to this issue of grounds for dismissal is the following. As far as I can tell, there is no review or appeal of a decision to dismiss a complaint. [So] currently in the Act the decision of the Commission to dismiss a complaint will be reviewed by the Human Rights Tribunal if the complainant so wishes. That is no longer the case. And that is a problem. There should be a means of reviewing decisions to dismiss complaints.

And now I come to my final area of concern — the one, I believe, that has attracted the majority media, political and public attention. That is the proposal to abolish the Human Rights Tribunal and assign the role of hearing all human rights complaints that reach the hearing stage to the Court of Queen's Bench instead.

As a first note it is worth underscoring that this would be out of step with every other human rights system in Canada — all provinces, territories, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission maintain a system which entrusts the hearing of human rights complaints to specialized, informal tribunals. The role of the courts is left to dealing with legal and jurisdictional issues and reviewing tribunal decisions for errors. This has very much come to be seen as best practice.

[16:45]

So here we have a case, Mr. Speaker, with this legislation where the Saskatchewan Party has decided to lead all of Canada. They want to be the best at something. They want to lead the country. But they're doing it in eroding people's fundamental human rights — a fundamentally wrong way to lead a province. They're leading it in exactly the wrong direction.

And again these are the words of the Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada. He goes on to say:

Notably, other jurisdictions have conducted reviews of their human rights complaint process over the past several years. Those reviews have led to a number of changes, some of which were controversial. But none proposed, nor led to the dismantling of tribunals.

So again we're going to lead the country. The Saskatchewan Party government is going to lead the country in something. But it's taking Saskatchewan in the wrong direction. It's eroding the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan residents in a way that doesn't take place in any other province or territory in the country.

The Secretary-General goes on to say:

I understand that there are concerns that the Tribunal process has been inefficient. Government figures that indicate that the average amount . . . to resolve a case is [up to] 21 months. First, remember my opening words — human rights adjudication is not easy and straightforward. I'm not saying 21 months is a good thing. But do remember that some, even many cases, may well take a considerable amount of time to resolve.

But secondly, I am unclear why the response to concerns about long delays with the Tribunals is to abolish the Tribunals rather than explore possibilities for improvement, including restructuring, revised rules, greater resourcing, full-time members or other options.

So what is being said quite clearly by the Secretary-General is that instead of supporting the tribunals, which is done in every other jurisdiction in Canada to help support and enhance the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan residents, they chose to blow up the tribunals and lead the country in the wrong direction. Instead of enhancing the tribunals, they choose to go a different direction, which in the view of the Secretary-General of Amnesty International Canada is the wrong direction.

He goes on to say, "I have heard nothing to suggest those options have been explored and rejected." So again, not only do they consult poorly, if at all, but they also have not gone through the option of supporting the tribunals in any way. They have not been explored and have been rejected.

And he goes on to say:

I have heard nothing to explain why reforming and strengthening the Tribunals is not possible; and that the only response to the challenges and difficulties the Tribunals face is to do away with them.

I think it is safe to say that there are two reasons that all jurisdictions, including Saskatchewan to date, have opted for this model: expertise and accessibility.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fundamental human rights complaints, when it's a complaint against an organization with respect to who you are fundamentally as a person, I would argue that two of the most important things that the body that's hearing the complaint should have are expertise and accessibility, and this legislation, as has been denoted, takes us backward in each case. Certainly accessibility is a huge issue.

Now the Secretary-General goes on to say that:

Tribunals are able to build expertise in human rights — and even specialized expertise with respect to specific human rights issues, such as the rights of First Nations people or of people living with disabilities or the gendered aspect of . . . human rights claims — that judges . . . would simply not be able to build given the breadth of subject matter they are required to deal with in their courts.

The value of that expertise cannot be understated. It is, in fact, one of the key reasons that governments have set up

administrative tribunals to hold hearings with respect to a wide range of important and specialized decisions in society, including refugee protection, licensing television stations, and making parole decisions. Expertise is not always easy to develop, but it is of obvious benefit in making sound decisions.

Tribunals are also generally seen to be more accessible. They are much less formal than the courts, including with respect to rules of procedure and evidence, and are more flexible with respect to legal representation and less dependent upon lawyers.

I know that the Commission and the government have sought to ease some of the concerns about the Courts being too formal and intimidating. We are told that they most certainly apply relaxed rules for human rights hearings. However, the Act quite specifically notes that the hearings will be governed by the Rules of the Court of Queen's Bench and does not legislate any notable exemptions from that requirement.

So that appears to be entirely contradictory, Mr. Speaker. You have the commission and the government suggesting that they're going to ease some of the concerns about the courts being too formal and intimidating, and we're told that the rules will be relaxed for human rights hearings, but the Act specifically notes that hearings will be governed by the rules of the Court of Queen's Bench. And there is no legislation that put forth any notable exemptions from that requirement.

So either you're going to make them less formal and more accessible or you're going to keep them the same. Clearly it's being stated that they're going to be more relaxed, however what is written in the legislation is exactly the opposite of that — that there will not be any notable exceptions from the requirement to be governed by the rules of the Court of Queen's Bench.

I'll go on to read, Mr. Speaker:

Previous provisions describing the more relaxed nature of tribunal hearings are gone, including that tribunals were empowered to admit any evidence of information that it considers "appropriate" even when that evidence or information would not be admissible under normal rules of court.

So the tribunals could hear and digest information that is not deemed appropriate by the Court of Queen's Bench. However what is said explicitly in the Act is that the hearings will be governed by the rules for the Court of Queen's Bench. So again, an erosion of the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan people to provide evidence in a way that they could provide it previously. Now that evidence will be inadmissible. That's what it says right here, Mr. Speaker. And so again, making it more difficult for people to have their case heard and not enhancing it as should be done.

I'll go on to read, Mr. Speaker:

In its question and answer document the government indicates that there is "no reason why the Court would not

be willing or able to adopt a more informal hearing process." But there is no explanation why the Act does not legislate that requirement rather than leave it open to the willingness of the judges.

So if you wanted to put forward a Bill that made the proper changes, you would also introduce the changes that enable the courts to have a more relaxed approach to these hearings. But the government in this case has neglected to do that, which is very unfortunate. And again we're talking about fundamental human rights for Saskatchewan residents. And so any time you strip away even a small amount of their right, you have to be awfully careful. But I've noted here now several occasions where that's taken place, and it's cause for great concern. Certainly being heard by opposition members with respect to this legislation.

It goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

We are also told that the concerns about legal representation are misplaced because the Commission will represent the individual at all levels of the court process. Well the Commission is not the individual. The Act makes it clear, noting that both the Commission and the complainant have the right to counsel, separate rights to counsel. But making it also clear . . . that complainants would have to fund counsel at their own expense.

So again, a fundamental change from what existed previously in Saskatchewan, considering that you could take your case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and not have to . . . not cause you the expense to do so. In this case, it's made clear that complainants would have to fund counsel at their own expense. So if that is not stripping away at the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan people, I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker. It says right there, the minister in his previous remarks talked how it's important to have accessibility for the court hearing so that people who are witnessing can attend. That's how he wants to enhance the accessibility. But when it comes to the accessibility of the complainant, there's silence. And in fact, worse than silence, there's a clear definition that complainants will have to fund counsel at their expense, eroding fundamentally their human right to bring forward a complaint to the government.

He goes on to say that:

There is a big difference as to how this plays out in a tribunal setting as opposed to the courts. First, as a general rule a legal bill for a lawyer appearing before a tribunal would be lower . . . from a lawyer . . . As well, in a less formal tribunal setting it may be more feasible for an individual to go ahead without representation or be represented by somebody other than a lawyer . . . I would say that these three concerns — about expertise, formality, and legal representation — are major, substantive shortcomings in the proposal to do away with tribunals and turn to the courts. I would urge that the proposal be reconsidered and that the options for improving and strengthening of the tribunal process be pursued instead.

Now in addition to Amnesty International, the people of Saskatchewan have been pressing the opposition to have the government withdraw this Bill, do the consultation that they



said they have done and do it properly, and to ensure that the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan people are enhanced and not reduced, as this legislation clearly does, Mr. Speaker.

There was a petition read, signed by a number of Saskatchewan residents that are concerned with the fact that Bill 160, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*, was introduced into the Legislative Assembly despite the fact that it will make the system for hearing for human rights complaints less accessible to the victims of human rights violations.

Furthermore, the citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned with the fact that Bill 160 was introduced into the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan without first being subject to an extensive and public consultation process. Still further, the citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned with the fact that Government of Saskatchewan has been supporting an information campaign that explains the abstract aims of the Chief Human Rights Commissioner, but not substantive portions of Bill 160 itself.

So, Mr. Speaker, there you have it. The people of Saskatchewan are asking for, again, a proper consultation to take place by this government in the same way that they have with many other pieces of legislation. And a repeat here we have of the WHPA [*The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*] legislation where the government said they consulted with the people of Saskatchewan but absolutely failed to do so. That they failed to do so, when they designate 3.5 million acres of Saskatchewan land up for sale that was previously protected, that's bad, Mr. Speaker.

But what I would argue is far worse than that, it's a fundamental erosion of the human rights of Saskatchewan people. Because now they're making it, this government, the Saskatchewan Party is making it much more difficult for Saskatchewan residents to lodge a complaint and to be heard. Again this is fundamental to who we are as human beings that these complaints arise, the reason these complaints arise.

Now I know I have a number of other colleagues that would like to weigh in on this legislation. And with that, I would adjourn the debate on this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved adjournment of debate on the Bill No. 160, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Being now the hour of 5 p.m., this Assembly will recess until tonight at 7 p.m.

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



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