



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

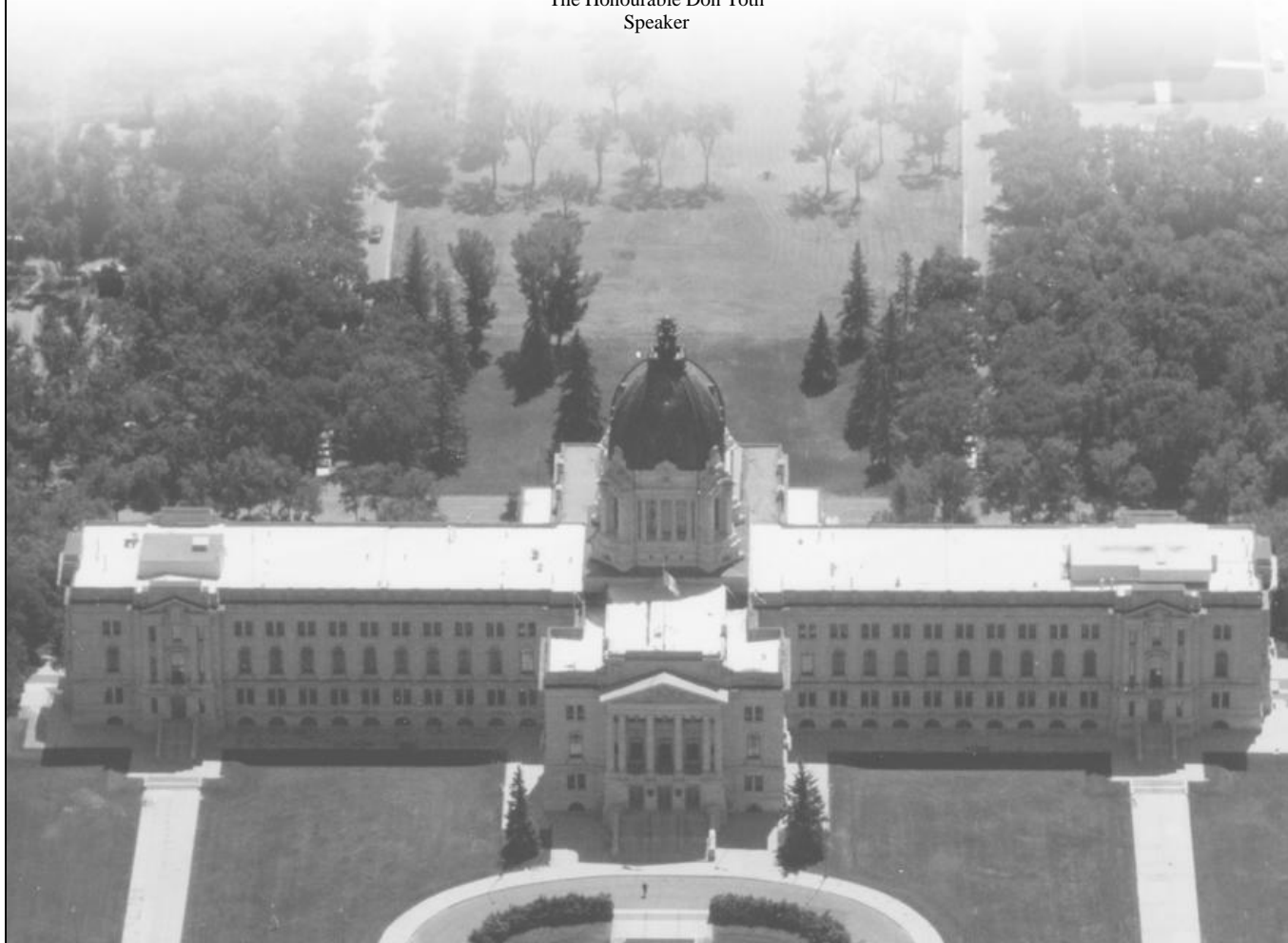
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lingenfelter, Dwain	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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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 Minister Responsible for . . . let's see, Municipal Affairs. Sorry about that.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — That's okay, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure, I get to introduce a gentleman from the Prince Albert Police Service, Chief Dale McFee. Dale, you want to take a stand and a wave?

Dale has been a member of the police service in Prince Albert for over 25 years — hard to believe. We've been friends since he played with the Raiders and I didn't, although I tried. He's been a chief since 2003. In 2008 he received the Order of Merit from the Governor General, and although he takes great pride in that accomplishment, Mr. Speaker, it's the things he's done as a leader in the Prince Albert Police Service. He's tackling problems, bringing teams together of workers to deal with the poverty issues, addictions issues, and crime issues in Prince Albert. He is going to be talking to various ministers this afternoon about new, innovative techniques through mobilization of these resources in our province to deal with the root of crime in our city of Prince Albert and across the entire province.

But a bigger source of accomplishment and pride for the chief — who was my chief, by the way; I think I gave him some grey hairs there too, I might add — is that he has three lovely daughters: Jayde who is playing soccer for the U of R [University of Regina] Cougars right now, Kacey who is at St. Mary High School, and his youngest daughter Meghan. And Chief McFee takes great pride in having coached all three of his daughters at a very high level of soccer in this province.

So I want to take this time to welcome, Chief, welcome you to your Legislative Assembly. And on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, we will always do well, sir, by taking your lead and your vision and your advice. Thank you.

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to rise with the minister and acknowledge the gallery guests today. Chief McFee, it's great to see him in the gallery today. I had the great pleasure of playing with Dale. Along as being friends with him, I've played hockey with him in my recent past.

He is doing tremendous work in Prince Albert on behalf of the police service, looking at not only crime and how to solve crime and react to it, but how to prevent it, Mr. Speaker. He's doing some very important work on the root causes of crime and how we can make a change both in Prince Albert and in northern Saskatchewan. So I very much appreciate the work that he's doing for our community and for northern Saskatchewan. I'd

like to have the rest of the members of the Assembly help me welcome him here today. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly three representatives seated in your gallery of Fleet Publications of Winnipeg. Seated in your gallery is Fleet publisher George Derksen, a proud Saskatchewan expatriate, along with associate publisher Ann Wiens and production and circulation manager Delbert Quiring.

Fleet Publications has for years produced softcover coffee-table-style books on Canadian cities and provinces. I notice this one that they just published is called *The New Saskatchewan*. And I would want to ask all members to join with me in thanking George, Ann, and Del for showing confidence in our province and recognizing an opportunity. Saskatchewan was indeed a great business opportunity for them as well.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members a number of individuals seated in your gallery who have come to the legislature today to express some concerns that they have around post-secondary education in Saskatchewan.

I'd like to introduce Dwayne Paul, chief of One Arrow First Nation. Thank you for being here, Chief Paul. Also we have Nathan Bitternose who is a councillor from George Gordon First Nation who holds the education portfolio. Thank you. We also have Lorne Roper, director of operations for Yellow Quill First Nation. Thank you for being here today. We also, Mr. Speaker, have a number of concerned citizens from the communities of Humboldt and Muenster, and I know it's a pleasure to see them here in the Assembly.

While all of those guests are certainly important, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most special guests that we have here today is a class of adult basic education students from One Arrow, Mr. Speaker. In speaking with them, for the vast majority this is their first trip to the legislature. And I think they chose a very important issue and a very important day to come to the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

So I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these very special guests to the legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming guests, First Nations individuals from across the province, some chiefs and leaders and students. Thank you very much for coming to your Legislative Assembly. I find it's

always a highlight when we can welcome First Nations individuals to this Assembly, and please enjoy your time here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my learned friend from Saskatoon Massey Place and welcome the First Nations guests and their guests as well. And as they often say, it's always important to recognize the Aboriginal peoples and the Aboriginal languages of our great province. So I want to take this opportunity to say to them in my own language of Cree:

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

To my language translation: I'm very happy that they're here, and not to be afraid of this Assembly because this Assembly is theirs just as much as it's ours. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to introduce a wonderful young lady sitting in the Speaker's gallery, Saskatchewan legislative intern program, and the intern is Nicole Hamm from Rosthern. Nicole is an opera singer, currently a law student at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], and she has a master's in political science. So I'd like everyone to give her a warm welcome to her Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the east gallery, there is a group of 20 grade 8 students from St. Peter School. I wanted to say O'Neill, and that's the high school right next to St. Peter School in Argyre Park.

With the 20 grade 8 students, we have a very distinguished guest today. We have none other than the Vice-Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society of Saskatchewan. And it's quite fitting that Peter Kucherepa would be joining this class this day, this being Commonwealth Day throughout the Commonwealth, and in recognition of what his role is as Vice-Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society of Saskatchewan.

The students are actually doing a display around the Commonwealth at St. Peter School, and I hope to be able to get there after question period and before the display is all finished. So I hope to catch up with them at St. Peter School later this afternoon. Of note, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Lieutenant Governor is also going to be at St. Peter School to help celebrate Commonwealth Day and the work that the students have, and teachers I guess, have done at St. Peter School.

This day I ask all members to join me in welcoming all of our guests from St. Peter's School.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I introduce Ms. Shaheen Lotun in your gallery. Shaheen would be recognizable to many members in this Assembly; she served as a Page in 2009. In 2009 she also graduated from the U of R, political science. In fall of 2010, she graduated from Carleton University, African studies and human rights. She's been my intern for a number of weeks.

In that short time we've gotten to know each other very well. She's had the opportunity to visit in the constituency of Yorkton for a good part of one week and a part of another week, attending a lot of events and doing some very important work that we do in Yorkton. And she's just been a total joy to work with. And I'd just ask all members to join with me in welcoming her to this Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, I'd like to introduce another friend to this Assembly: Mr. Ryan Steffensen in the blue shirt up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Ryan, just give us a wave. Ryan's a good friend of mine. I've known him for a number of years, originally through my brother: an air traffic controller with my brother, currently a commercial pilot — he's flying for West Wind — lives in Regina, hails from the mighty town of Carlyle, and is currently flying out of Stony Plain on a King Air 200. So I'd just ask everybody to welcome Ryan to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one more introduction I would like to make, and I wanted to save the best for last. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Cecile Smith who is a councillor from Fishing Lake First Nation, and she holds the education portfolio. So welcome, Cecile.

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce Chad Jeremy from the Salvation Army here in Regina. He has been associated with numerous efforts with the Salvation Army.

This morning he helped to host an event regarding forklift training, and that's a partnership between the Salvation Army, the Regina & District Food Bank, the Carmichael Outreach, TransGas, and our ministry as well. Today we'd like to just offer our sincere thanks to Chad for his ongoing efforts on this new initiative, as well as the continuing efforts of the Salvation Army, including the work under way regarding Japan, Mr. Speaker. So I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Chad to his Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I also would like to, as my colleague from Massey Place did, I'd also like to acknowledge Cecile Smith who is a constituent of mine here in Saskatoon Riversdale and also

works at St. Mary's school and does so much for the students and the families of our community. So thank you very much Cecile, and I'd like the Assembly to welcome Cecile.

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Andrew Mackenzie. Mr. Mackenzie is a group executive and chief executive non-ferrous and a member of the group management committee with BHP Billiton.

Mr. Mackenzie joined BHP Billiton in November of 2008 in his current position as chief executive non-ferrous. His prior career includes time with Rio Tinto where he was a chief executive of diamonds and minerals, and with BP where he had a number of senior roles including group vice-president of technology and engineering, and group vice-president of chemicals.

Mr. Mackenzie is increasingly present in Saskatchewan, and we fully expect to see him at a number of Rider games this upcoming season. Please join with me in welcoming Andrew Mackenzie to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I realize now why these introduction sheets are pink, and it's to reflect the embarrassment I have for missing the two teachers from St. Peter School, the two teachers joining the 20 grade 8s and the Vice-Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society of Saskatchewan. The two teachers are Melissa Barnabe and Tom Kuntz. Please welcome these two teachers to the Assembly.

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Mr. Mackenzie to the Assembly today. I know that they're making some tremendous investments in Saskatchewan, and those investments will benefit the future of all the Saskatchewan peoples. Thank you for being here today.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce the Assembly to a woman who's sitting in your gallery today: Janice Bernier who is a president of her district labour council, has been a tireless worker for human rights in Saskatchewan and has done amazing work on behalf of Saskatchewan women. She's the NDP [New Democratic Party] candidate in the Batoche constituency, and we're very proud that she's joining our team and will be here in November of 2011. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Junor: — Eastview. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to our attention the Saskatchewan Seniors Association has approximately 180 seniors' centres throughout the province, and the vast majority of them are located in rural constituencies. These centres provide much-needed recreation and social activities as well as important health clinics and workshops which contribute to an enhanced quality of life for many of the seniors who use them.

Skyrocketing costs of utilities, insurances, tax, garbage disposal, and exterior maintenance — due to that, approximately one-quarter of these centres may close within the next 18 months. The closure of these centres will lead to the deteriorating mental and physical health of seniors, which will lead to additional stress on long-term care facilities and hospitals.

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

And these petitions are signed by over 30 people from Shell Lake, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Shellbrook, and Carrot River. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for protection for tenants from unreasonable rent increases through rent controls. And we know that since 2007, far too many tenants have suffered monthly rent increases of hundreds of dollars, with average rent increases of over 35 per cent in Saskatoon and Regina, meaning tenants in many cases are paying well over \$3,000 more each year. And we also know, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines including Manitoba, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island.

I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to immediately enact rent control legislation that protects Saskatchewan tenants from unreasonable rent increases.

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 to present a petition signed by constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place who live in Hampton Village and their call for a new school for their children.

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 Hampton Village. I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to again present a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan concerned about Bill 160 and the detrimental effects that it will have on human rights law in the province. And the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly 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 today the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn, Moose Jaw, Battleford, and Regina, 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 unprecedented mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the two consecutive deficit budgets, the significant debt loading that's going on underneath the Sask Party, all at a time when we have unprecedented highs in revenues, Mr. Speaker. And of course this sort of mismanagement, this sort of debt loading, these sorts of deficits all come at a cost to Saskatchewan people. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned citizens of Regina. I so submit. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Earthquake in Japan

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the recent earthquake in Japan has produced some startling images. In mere seconds, entire villages and towns were swept away by the resulting tidal waves.

Mr. Speaker, our hearts and prayers are with the people of Japan, as well as the people in Saskatchewan who have loved ones there. We can only imagine the anguish of being away from one's family during a natural disaster. Mr. Speaker, in true Saskatchewan fashion, support groups were almost immediately assisting our foreign students at both universities to offer whatever assistance was and is still needed. Numerous fundraising campaigns have been set in motion to assist with a relief effort, and I encourage all of the people of this province to offer what they can. Mr. Speaker, I know that when others are in their greatest times of need, the people of our province always rise to the occasion.

Our prayers are also with the Saskatchewan families who may have sons or daughters, brothers or sisters teaching English as a second language. We hope that they are all safe and able to communicate with their families at home to ease the fears of those families.

Mr. Speaker, tragedies such as this earthquake in Japan reminds us all of the truly important things in life — the health and safety of those nearest and dearest to us. On behalf of all MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], my sincerest sympathies, thoughts, and prayers go out to all those that have lost so much in Japan this last week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Estevan, and on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to extend our deepest sympathies to all those in Japan and indeed around the world affected by last week's terrible earthquake off the coast of Japan and the resulting tsunami.

I'd also like to say to those with friends and relatives in Japan that our prayers and thoughts are with you and your family at this difficult time. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan, through the Government of Saskatchewan, have offered 250,000 in assistance. And to the government, I want to commend them for that action on behalf of the people of the province. I know the people of Saskatchewan will also be making many personal donations to organizations offering relief and assistance, and I encourage all members and everyone to do the same as well.

Mr. Speaker, events such as this touch our hearts and remind us how fragile the gift of life can be. But they also give us an opportunity to show the solidarity and friendship of our fellow

human beings in a very, very practical way. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that the well-known generosity of the people of this province, Saskatchewan, will show itself again on this occasion as they undertake to help the people of Japan for whom they feel such deep concern at this tragic time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Agricultural Safety Week

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March 13th to 19th has been proclaimed Agricultural Safety Week in Saskatchewan. This week is a time to make note of the hazards that exist on farms across our province and to find ways to make farming safer.

Compared to the national average, Saskatchewan farmers have twice the hospitalization rate and one and a half times the death rate from injury. Every single year, an average of 21 people die on provincial farms, and over 300 are hospitalized due to preventable injuries. Many people don't realize that farming is the fourth most hazardous industry in Canada. We need to be aware of the dangers facing our farmers, and as a government we must continue to support safety initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, farming was a bedrock that this province was built on, continues to be a cornerstone of our growing economy. While we strive to provide safe workplaces across the province, we must also ensure that farms and ranches are safe as well. All too often a loved one has been needlessly injured or killed. We must work to prevent these tragic accidents from recurring.

On behalf of all MLAs, I would like to send well wishes and hope that all producers are safe out there this spring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Canadian Red Cross Month

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to one of Canada's best known and most effective humanitarian organizations. March is Canadian Red Cross month, Mr. Speaker. For over 100 years the Canadian Red Cross, following its fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality has worked tirelessly to provide immediate help to whoever needs it, wherever they are, whatever their race, political beliefs, religion, social status, or culture.

Today the Red Cross works with governments and humanitarian organizations to provide rapid large-scale and cost-effective, community-relevant programs. The Canadian Red Cross assists vulnerable communities nationally and internationally in cases of natural disasters, debilitating health issues, and war.

Mr. Speaker, it is especially fitting that we are honouring the Red Cross this month, given the disaster we see unfolding in Japan as well as other areas in the South Pacific affected by last

week's earthquake and tsunami. Support for these efforts come from many volunteers and donors, Mr. Speaker, and we know that the generosity of Saskatchewan's people will find expression at this time of need through the Red Cross and its work.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all honourable members join with me today in expressing our gratitude and honouring the Canadian Red Cross for over a century of exemplary and commendable service to the high ideal of the greater welfare of all humankind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wait Times for Cancer Patients Reduced

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited today to let you know about a lean initiative in Saskatoon that's improved wait times for cancer radiation care by 92 per cent. As you know, lean is an approach to increase efficiency to provide the highest level of care to patients. Using this lean methodology, not only is access improved for cancer patients, but the patient experience is vastly improved by reducing the number of appointments they need.

Mr. Speaker, eligible cancer patients receiving radiation therapy are being offered the opportunity to do their preparation for radiation on the same day as their first appointment with the oncologist. That simple change reduces the average wait time between appointments by five and a half days or 92 per cent. Mr. Speaker, approximately 50 per cent of all radiation therapy patients can be offered this change, which translates into a total savings of almost 3,700 wait days every year.

Both physicians and patients have seen the benefit of the lean approach. The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is encouraged by the improved access. And, Mr. Speaker, the good news is that this initiative has been so successful that there are plans to extend it soon to Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for continuing its continuous efforts to improve patient care. Our government will continue to provide the resources necessary to give Saskatchewan residents proactive, high-quality cancer services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Psychologist's Concerns

Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read from a letter addressed to the Premier that I have received from one of my constituents, Dr. Wayne Schlapkohl, a registered doctoral psychologist. And I quote:

I had the honour of recently meeting you when you presented me and my team the Premier's Award For Excellence in the Civil Service. I am a psychologist who, among other things, facilitates the treatment programs for abusive men for the award-winning Battlefords domestic violence treatment option court. I am also providing therapy for several very suicidal individuals. I provide

therapy to those who are depressed, anxious and desperate. But seemingly, I am not important enough to have a contract. I grew up in this province, I believe in this province, but I am disgusted by the way this province — and to be blunt, your government — is treating Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan.

Housing prices have skyrocketed, probably close to doubled, food prices are increasing, and you offer us less than 1 per cent per year. I believe that what HSAS [Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan] is presently suggesting is reasonable and I would hope that you will accept the HSAS offer. Please help us once again give, Saskatchewan a health care system that is the envy of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, the Minister of Health, the folks at SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] heed the words of this award-winning Saskatchewan psychologist.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Congratulations to Junior Curlers

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to bring to the attention of this House the young men and women from Saskatchewan who proudly represented our country on the world stage. The Regina rink — comprised of skip Braeden Moskowy and third Kirk Muires, second Colton Flasch, lead Matt Lang, fifth Regis Neumeier, and coach Dwayne Mihalicz — represented Canada and our province admirably at the world's junior men's championship in Perth, Scotland over the past few weeks.

Moskowy and his curling teammates advanced to the bronze medal game and came up short in their medal quest, finishing a very respectable fourth place. These young gentlemen represented Canada well both on and off the curling sheets. And I would like to congratulate them on their solid performance.

Mr. Speaker, Team Canada on the women's side was also represented by our province. The rink out of the Ituna curling consisted of skip Trish Paulsen, Kari Kennedy, Kari Paulsen, Natalie Yanko, and coach Bob Miller. These young ladies did a wonderful job representing our province and the country all week. The ladies' hard work and great play paid off with a berth to the championship final against Scotland's Eve Muirhead. In the end, the Paulsen rink came up short, but with bringing home the silver medal, the ladies made all curling fans in Saskatchewan proud.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all MLAs to join me in congratulating these two great rinks. The curling future of Saskatchewan looks to be in very capable hands. Thank you.

[14:00]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Funding for Catholic School Divisions

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question today deals with the funding of our school system and the need for every student in this province to be treated equally when it comes to funding of the school system in the province. And a year ago, I raised the issue of equitable funding in the province and the fact that the Catholic school boards in the province are not being treated equally with the public school system.

And my question to the minister today is to ask when and how the minister intends to balance that out, where the students in the Catholic school system are treated in an equitable manner with students in the public school system.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the students within our province are of extreme importance to us as we grow this province. And quite frankly, we are working our way through a new funding formula. It's a distribution mechanism that we're working towards. It is not the allocation or the amount of money, Mr. Speaker. We have increased the amount of money going to school divisions quite substantially over the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, if there was inequities — and we believe that there was — then maybe perhaps that member opposite could explain them, because the interim funding that we're using is based on the formula that the NDP had in place.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, a number of the Catholic school boards in the province are saying, because of the inequity that this government is providing in terms of funding, that a number of capital projects are having to be delayed or put on hold. Things like repair of schools, technology in the school system, those kind of things are being put on hold.

And my question to the minister is this: if in fact she's arguing that the system wasn't right when they came to government three and a half years ago, how is it that after three and a half years they haven't raised a finger to fix a system that isn't working for the Catholic school system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to say that our government is very committed to the education system. We have to date spent over \$400 million on capital projects. Those include projects within the Catholic school division. The Catholic school division have thanked us. The different school divisions have thanked us time and time again for those capital projects.

There are inequities. This is a huge undertaking that we are within in our province . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — And it's extremely important, Mr. Speaker. We have taken the funding formula that was in place under the NDP with all of its inequities. We have made some adjustments year over year, but an overall change to . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Minister of Education to complete it.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the member from Walsh Acres would like to join this debate, but the fact is we have been using the past formula and adding adjustments for student enrolment differences, for LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreements, and we're working our way through a new formula that will address the inequities.

I've met with the Catholic school divisions. They are providing me with information of where they specifically see inequities, and we will be looking at that in this year's funding.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that after the Sask Party was elected, there were changes made about the funding of school boards in the province that has been very detrimental. She knows that.

And my question is, that in light of the fact that the Catholic school board a year ago was told that if you just wait, play by the rules and just wait, we'll have funding formula in place . . . Well the Catholic school board has waited. They've been waiting for three and a half years, and now they're told that there will be no funding formula until after the election.

My question to the minister is this: how do you expect the people of the province in the Catholic school system to believe the promise made for the next election when you haven't kept your promise from the last election?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite should know that the election promise was the reduction of property tax. We have kept that promise. And nobody wants to go back to the tax regime of the NDP. That is not where they want to go.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased funding for school divisions year over year. Our increase in funding has been more than inflation during that time . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the member from Regina Walsh Acres to allow the minister to respond like the other members are allowing the minister. The Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The increase to school divisions has been more than the increase in students within our province, and it has been more than inflation over those three and a half years.

Mr. Speaker, as well as, we have made unprecedented commitment to capital projects within this province. Many of them are projects with the Catholic school divisions. I have been meeting with the Catholic school divisions. We will work through the inequities. But, Mr. Speaker, they are receiving increases in funding. And the inequities were something that was in place year after year after year under the NDP. I can assure you no school division wants to go back to that funding formula.

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

Relationship Between Colleges

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we learned last spring that the Sask Party government is quietly dismantling Carlton Trail Regional College, a public post-secondary institution, and handing it over to a private institution.

Internal documents show that discussions about the merger have been occurring since at least the summer of 2009. And the Minister of Advanced Education appointed a joint CEO [chief executive officer], established a transition board, and the process of integrating various core functions of the two institutions began.

Board minutes from January 26, 2010, state, "Direction has been given from Minister Norris to proceed." And St. Peter's College winter-spring 2010 newsletter stated, "The provincial government is encouraging the merger." At every step of the way, the process has lacked transparency, and there are rightfully many people unhappy.

To the minister: will he admit today that this whole merger process has been ham-handed from the start?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. What we've known is that over the course of the last decade, these two institutions have co-operated closely, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is attempted to be, on the one hand, responsive. There was an idea that came from the grassroots to help foster and facilitate increased co-operation and the opportunity to look at an amalgamation, Mr. Speaker. We actually received that last June, Mr. Speaker.

What we did is we went out to Meyers Norris Penny. We said, let's have an independent third party look at this. We've made no commitments, Mr. Speaker.

That report is now complete. It's been submitted to the ministry, and within a few days, Mr. Speaker, we'll be making those recommendations public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the grassroots are sitting in the gallery, and not everyone is pleased with the approach the minister has taken on this issue. Chief Dwayne Paul of One

Arrow First Nation wrote a letter to the editor last month to publicly raise his concerns about the dismantling of Carlton Trail Regional College. He said:

. . . we are deeply concerned about how the amalgamation of Carlton college with St. Peter's College (SPC) will affect the prioritization of services not only for First Nations communities, but also the access to programming for all communities in the Carlton Trail region.

He goes on to say:

No longer will the people of Saskatchewan, through the Advanced Education Ministry, have a say in what programs will be offered in the area and at what cost. Moreover, there has been little mention of what will happen to the significant public assets in the event that Carlton is merged with SPC.

To the minister: students and community leaders are concerned about the implications of dismantling Carlton Trail. Why has the minister failed to listen to these concerns?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with the interest of the students in mind, Mr. Speaker, that I responded to that letter to the editor, Mr. Speaker. And I said:

To ensure due diligence and transparency . . . [the ministry] hired Meyers Norris Penny, one of Canada's largest chartered accountancy and business advisory firms, to conduct extensive public consultation and to review, assess and provide recommendations on this proposal.

Numerous stakeholders have taken the opportunity to participate in these consultations.

Mr. Speaker, that report was recently submitted to the ministry, and within a couple of days, Mr. Speaker, we'll be making these recommendations public. We've taken very seriously, Mr. Speaker, again the obligations to be responsive — that is, ideas coming from the grassroots — and at the same time responsible, responsible to taxpayers, responsible to students, and most especially, Mr. Speaker, responsible to future generations to make sure they have opportunities within our post-secondary system.

The Speaker: — Order. I'd just like to remind our guests that they're not to participate in any form in the debate. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, Chief Dwayne Paul raised many questions in his open letter including:

. . . "Who does this merger serve?"

Does it serve the greater good of the majority of students and staff who access and run the services, or does it serve a smaller, elite group of people or a private institution?

He also said:

The dissolution of the college potentially has a far-reaching impact not only on those in the Carlton Trail region, but also for other regional colleges. What threat does such a policy pose that other colleges around the province, too, will be privatized?

To the minister: what are the answers to these important questions? Who does this merger serve, and how many other regional colleges will be privatized under the Sask Party's watch?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, under this government we've seen record investments to post-secondary educational institutions, Mr. Speaker, including a 53 per cent increase to operating funds for regional colleges, Mr. Speaker. What we're working to do, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that we're serving the interests of the students of this province for today and in the future, Mr. Speaker.

As I've said, there is a report. It has been submitted now, Mr. Speaker, to the ministry, Mr. Speaker. I anticipate that we'll make this report and the recommendations therefore will come out in the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what's important here is to look at the work that, the investment through the knowledge infrastructure program into both of these institutions, Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars in infrastructure that was neglected under the former government, Mr. Speaker. We know that. We've increased operating funds, Mr. Speaker, and now what we've attempted to do is be responsive to grassroots and at the same time responsible to students and taxpayers. We think we have that balance about right. And in the next couple of days we'll come forward with the recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the chief of the Prud'homme Fire and Rescue department also wrote a letter to the editor to publicly raise his concerns about this entire process because he's concerned about the implications for the unique volunteer firefighter training program at Carlton Trail.

Ward Perozuk wrote, "I question the actions or inactions of Minister Norris and our MLA, Ms. Harpauer . . ." He goes on to say, ". . . have they consulted the public for their opinion in what the right decision to make is? At present there are too many variables that the public is not being made aware of."

Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister commissioned a report after all this discussion about a joint CEO, a transition board, and other steps to support the merger, Mr. Speaker. With community leaders publicly raising concerns and student leaders travelling to the Legislative Assembly because they're frustrated and worried, will he commit to table that report today? He has it. It should be open to the public. It's a public report. Table it today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we've said, this work is very, very important. It's an attempt to be responsive, Mr. Speaker, to grassroots ideas about ways to move forward, and responsible to taxpayers and students, Mr. Speaker.

We've recently received this report, Mr. Speaker. We'll be coming forward with the recommendations in the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is that way we can make sure that local stakeholders are positioned and prepared to understand our recommendations and moving forward with the least disruption, Mr. Speaker, to those local stakeholders, and most especially to the students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Investments in Health Care

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For two years we've heard promises from the Sask Party about taking steps to reduce surgical wait-lists throughout the province. But just this past week, it has been reported that the Saskatoon Health Region will miss its targets.

Mr. Speaker, the government has promised us that those private clinics would erase surgical wait times. Instead we find that the government's plan doesn't work. To the minister: when will the government stop diverting public health care dollars to private health care that fails to deliver?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it didn't take us long after we became government to put a Patient First Review in place. That Patient First Review identified some issues around access, certainly around surgical access. And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly heard that on the doorsteps. After 16 years of NDP government, we had the longest wait-lists in Canada, Mr. Speaker. That's what they oversaw.

So, Mr. Speaker, we began work on a surgical care initiative that will look at the whole continuum of surgery, Mr. Speaker, and we've seen those numbers decrease. In the first three and a half years of this Sask Party government, we've seen people waiting 18 months or longer reduced by over 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker. People waiting over 12 months have reduced by 25 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Great progress; lots more to do, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've put \$40 million more into reducing surgeries within the next year, Mr. Speaker, aggressive goals but goals that this government isn't scared to set because, Mr. Speaker, the system is working hard to meet them.

[14:15]

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Promises, promises. The government promised \$2.8 million in additional funds to

the Saskatoon Health Region this past budget. A large part of that money was earmarked to go directly to a for-profit health care company.

To the minister: with wait times for surgery still longer than 18 months for about 30 per cent of the patients in this province, with no solution in sight — another promise on its way to being broken — will the minister stop wasting time and public dollars and invest in public health care that actually works?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we've hired the services of two third party deliverers within a public system — no paying out of pocket, no jumping the queue, Mr. Speaker — two third party deliverers, one in Saskatoon, one here in Regina, that are seeing the wait-list for certain surgeries reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell those 6 to 700 people that if we ever go back to the NDP, Mr. Speaker, those people would be at the back of the waiting list, waiting years was what they had to do under NDP government.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health minister has told the province that wait-lists for surgeries will be reduced to 18 months, and at that point, the existing public health care system would carry on.

To the minister: now that he's missed his target, can he tell us if the health regions will receive in the next budget the money that they require to deliver public health care for Saskatchewan families, or will he continue to waste public money on private health care that doesn't work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, our surgical care initiative states that we'll reduce people's wait to no longer than three months by the year 2014.

We won't be like the opposition that would give up on any sort of long-term plan that would see a reduction in wait times, Mr. Speaker. That isn't what this government's going to do. We're going to fulfill our commitment.

But, Mr. Speaker, I find it really interesting because if we ever go back to the NDP, they'll cancel all the contracts for the private surgery clinics, they'll cancel all the contracts for the private ambulances which they oversaw. In fact, will you cancel the private contracts for lab services and X-rays? That's a private delivery within a public system. If they're so dead against it, will they cancel them?

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

Contract Negotiations with Resident Physicians

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the Professional Association

of Internes and Residents of Saskatchewan, PAIRS, have been without a contract for over two years. Resident physicians are frustrated. They feel unappreciated and unwanted. Their morale is at an all-time low.

Over the past two years, the College of Medicine has graduated 116 resident physicians, and only 46 have chosen to stay in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how is refusing to negotiate a fair, respectful contract with resident physicians doing anything to increase the retention and recruitment of young specialists?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we know the human resources challenge that we took over when we became government was a huge challenge, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the opposition didn't want to talk about the nursing complement in this province. They didn't want to set targets. Our government set targets, and within the first three years, we met a target that we weren't expected to meet in four years, Mr. Speaker. That's what this government has accomplished.

When it comes to physician recruitment and retention, Mr. Speaker, under their government, 60 seats for medical training, Mr. Speaker, and 60 residency seats, Mr. Speaker — absolutely inadequate. Our government has increased the number of medical seats to 100 and the number of residencies to 120. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite said we're not attracting residents. We had the highest match on CaRMS [Canadian resident matching service] of the province's history under this government.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — This is a sad day for Saskatchewan when we just hear this. This is a sad day when he takes that as being good. Mr. Speaker, despite everything the minister says, according to the 2011 Canadian medical resident match, CaRMs analysis, the discussion paper put together by PAIRS action committee, Saskatchewan didn't improve on its performance in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the second worst out of 17 medical schools participating in the match program, and the minister is refusing to negotiate a fair and respectful contract with the resident physicians. We're not filling our positions, especially in family medicine.

To the minister: when is he going to finally negotiate a fair contract with PAIRS so resident physicians will get their specialty training in Saskatchewan and remain in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I am very aware that the negotiations between the U of S, University of Saskatchewan, and the residents is ongoing, Mr. Speaker. Like all negotiations, there are times where it gets very tense, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that all health providers within this province, whether it's the nurses, whether it's the doctors, whether it's the health

care providers, have received a fair compensation, Mr. Speaker, a fair contract.

Well they're laughing out loud. Mr. Speaker, the last CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] contract that was signed under our government had a 95 per cent approval rating, Mr. Speaker, and they're laughing.

Mr. Speaker, we have work to do on the retention of our residents, Mr. Speaker, but we will never go back to the day when the College of Medicine was put on probation under the NDP.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, it's quite something to be proud of: the second worst out of 17 medical schools participating in a match program. Mr. Speaker, the minister has negotiated a contract with the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association] providing doctors with a 24 per cent increase. We've also heard that the SMA contract, there is a reopener clause that allows for a contract to reopen the day after the 2011 election.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to negotiate a fair and respectful contract with PAIRS that includes a reopener clause like we hear is in the SMA contract where it doesn't . . . [inaudible] . . . the resident physicians as much as other doctors.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the contract is being negotiated right now between the University of Saskatchewan and the PAIRS association, Mr. Speaker. Those negotiations and talks are ongoing. I really think that we're going to see a contract, a final contract, in a very near future, Mr. Speaker. I certainly hope so for all, Mr. Speaker.

But I will tell you that we cannot go back to the days when we would only attract 60 residents to this province, Mr. Speaker — absolutely unacceptable. Is that what they would rather do, is to go back to the old days, Mr. Speaker? Because this government won't. We're staying with 120, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to improve the retention rate of those residencies year over year, Mr. Speaker. That's what this government is committed to.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, we're all still waiting. It's three and a half years ago. Mr. Speaker, over two years, the resident physicians have been without a contract. Morale among resident physicians is an all-time low. They've written letters to the minister, and 90 per cent of the Saskatchewan resident physicians have signed a petition asking for a fair contract. They have lost faith and trust in the government to the point of withdrawing from the doctor recruitment agency. According to the PAIRS action committee report, 6 out of 10 residents will not stay in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main points of the contract negotiations is retroactive pay. Will the minister commit today to full

retroactive pay for residents so residents will stay in Saskatchewan and people will get the health care they deserve?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I think that member's been in this House long enough to know that we don't negotiate a contract for anyone on the floor of this legislature, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the member opposite: is that what he would do, Mr. Speaker, if he ever got into this chair, was negotiate a contract on the floor of the legislature? Is that what he would do, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I think you can see by the track record of this government, we offer fair wages, Mr. Speaker, to all health care providers. The University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon is the one that is negotiating with the PAIRS, Mr. Speaker. It's employer-employee negotiations. They are at the table right now. Negotiations haven't broken off at all, Mr. Speaker. They're working to find a collective agreement that will be good for all, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, again I will tell you, and I'll tell the residents and the general public — they're very, very valuable people within our system, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've doubled the number of residencies in this province compared to where they were under the NDP.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, residency positions remain vacant, second highest vacancy in Canada. Mr. Speaker, in the last two years, out of 116 graduate residency physicians, only 45 chose to stay in Saskatchewan. We have petitions, low morale. And, Mr. Speaker, is it no wonder that we are often considered a donor province in Canada when it comes to trained doctors?

Again, the minister should know what is going on. And I would at this time ask him: will the minister commit today to full retroactive pay for residents so the residents will stay in Saskatchewan and people will get the health care they deserve?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I'll try and walk it through slowly for that member opposite, that the Government of Saskatchewan, this government, doesn't negotiate with PAIRS. The University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon does the negotiating with their employees. That's PAIRS; that's the residents. They're the ones that do the negotiating.

But even if the negotiations were conducted through this government, Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate to carry on those negotiations . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. There's two members on the back bench of the opposition that just will not allow the minister to respond to the question. I'll ask the members to allow the minister to respond to the question presented by the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that if . . . Under this government we will not do the negotiating on the floor of this Assembly, and I don't believe they would've either. They never did before, Mr. Speaker. They loved to interfere with negotiations in the back, behind the back doors, Mr. Speaker, absolutely time in and time out.

We have offered fair, competitive wages to the health care providers, Mr. Speaker. I believe the university will offer the same to the residents of this province, Mr. Speaker. But as I said, if we ever go back, which I don't think this province ever will want to, go back to the tired, old NDP days of losing the College of Medicine and cutting the number of residencies in this province in half.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 164 — *The Police Amendment Act, 2011*

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

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 164, *The Police Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing has moved first reading of Bill No. 164, *The Police Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 165 — *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 165, *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister . . . Order. Order. The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill 165, *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

[14:30]

MESSAGE FROM HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Before orders of the day, I invite, ask members and our guests to stand as I read a message from Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

Last week on the 8th of March, we marked the 100th anniversary of the first International Women's Day. The idea of having a women's day was first proposed against the backdrop of the rapid industrialization of the early 20th century. From small beginnings, this idea has grown to become a widely recognized way of celebrating women around the world. While some people use this day to acknowledge the love, admiration, and respect for women, others use it to remember the great social and political strides made both by and for women in the last 100 years. There is no right or wrong approach.

In the Commonwealth every year, 26 million girls are born. And this equates to one new baby girl arriving almost every second of every day. In the time it takes to hold the Commonwealth observation services at Westminster Abbey, nearly 4,000 girls will have been born in Commonwealth lands. And every one of these births marks the start of a new life — a journey which begins with the hopes of parents, families, and communities, and which is continued through the aspirations of those girls themselves.

This year the Commonwealth celebrates the important role that women already play in every walk of life and in every Commonwealth country from the richest to the poorest areas, across continents and oceans, from villages to places of international debate, in every culture and faith, recognizing that women are agents of change in so many ways: as mothers and sisters, teachers and doctors, artists and craftspeople, smallholders and entrepreneurs,

and as leaders of our societies, unleashing the potential of those around them.

And also this year, the Commonwealth reflects on what more could be achieved if women were able to play an even larger role. For example, I am encouraged that last year the Commonwealth launched a global effort to train and support half a million more midwives worldwide. In all this work, the commendable goal is to create a greater opportunity for women as children and adults to pursue their hopes and dreams, to attain their goals, and to make best use of their talents and knowledge.

This year, on Commonwealth Day especially, as governments continue to search for new ways to tackle these important challenges, let us all give a thought to the practical ways in which we, as individuals or as groups, can provide support to girls and women so that everyone can have a chance of a fuller and more rewarding life wherever they happen to be.

Elizabeth R

Please be seated.

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I ask the member to state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday last during debate on Bill 144 by the member for Regina Coronation Park, the member for Athabasca yelled profanity across the floor of the Assembly, words which were clearly recorded by the video recording system at 1 hour, 48 minutes and 14 seconds of the recording. I would ask that you review Wednesday's proceedings, and I ask that the member for Athabasca withdraw his comments and apologize for his behaviour and unparliamentary language. I raise this now since the videos were not available until late Thursday afternoon.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, points of order are to be raised at the first opportunity. At the time those comments were made, Mr. Speaker, many members on the government side made notice of those remarks. At that period of time would be when the Government House Leader should have stood on his feet and raised the issue, Mr. Speaker, because many of his members were very, very . . . yelling and animated about the comments that were made, Mr. Speaker.

He had the opportunity at that time to raise them, ask you at that time to then check the record, Mr. Speaker. Now two days have passed, Mr. Speaker. He's given up his opportunity to do it at the first opportunity.

The Speaker: — Order. I've listened to the point of order

presented by the Government House Leader. I've listened to the arguments against the point of order by the Opposition House Leader. And the Opposition House Leader is correct in the fact that the member raising it at first opportunity . . . As the Government House Leader however pointed out the use of the equipment in the Assembly, I think it would be appropriate for the Speaker, rather than doing it and making an immediate rule, would take the time to review and come back to the Assembly with the appropriate response to the point of order. I thank the members for their responses.

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 Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and to join in on the debate on Bill No. 161, *An Act to Amend The Election Act*. And it's a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to do so after those wonderful greetings from Her Majesty the Queen, greetings, Mr. Speaker, that reminded us of the number of baby girls born in the Commonwealth over the past year. And I have to say her comments certainly made me a little homesick as I turn my thoughts towards 161, but that is not directly related.

But what is directly related to 161, Mr. Speaker, is the ability of everyone in our province, whether they're a man or a woman, boy or girl at this time and approaching the legal age to vote, Mr. Speaker, it's essential that everyone have the ability to participate in the democratic process. That's part of the values that we espouse as a member of a Commonwealth, and it's something that all political parties, Mr. Speaker, ought to be concerned about and ought to promote in our activities.

And, Mr. Speaker, we ought to, as a provincial government and a member of the Canadian federation, look for approaches as a government that encourages increased participation in the electoral process, looks at ways of engaging people who've not traditionally voted or engaging individuals who are approaching voting age and do not have familiarity with the process of voting.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's essential that we as legislators look at what policies, what types of legislation can be brought into being that can foster increased voter participation in our democracy because, Mr. Speaker, voter turnout and the level of engagement that people have with their democracy really is an indicator with respect to how healthy a democracy is. Do people feel like they control the end result? Do people feel like they've been listened to? Is the electoral system and the rules around

voting responsive to their needs? And so clearly, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's a member in the Assembly here that would argue or disagree with the need to have an approach to elections that encourages participation and ensures that everyone has a chance to participate in the electoral process.

So in looking at Bill No. 161, *An Act to Amend The Election Act*, this piece of legislation proposed by the government would bring in a requirement for a type of government-issued photo ID [identification]. The government news release from November 30th of 2010, the opening line says, "The Government of Saskatchewan has introduced *The Election Amendment Act, 2010* to require voters at provincial elections to produce approved identification, such as government-issued photo ID." So that's the issue at hand, Mr. Speaker.

We know that when looking at this piece of legislation that's proposed and as it relates to the electoral system, there have been other steps that the members opposite have taken around the electoral system that to me provide a pretty clear indication with how they approach matters to do with elections, how they approach the right of individuals to vote.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm thinking about the role of independent officers of the legislature, specifically the Chief Electoral Officer. In this situation, the individual who's in charge of ensuring that we have free and fair elections in the province and that results can be trusted and that all candidates follow the rule and the letter of the law and the spirit, in this instance, Mr. Speaker, we saw that there was a selection process that went under way to select who should be the permanent Chief Electoral Officer. We know that the Justice minister came forward with a name for his endorsement, presumably speaking on behalf of government, and this individual was agreed upon by members on the opposition as well.

The snag that came about, Mr. Speaker, was when the issue of who would be the Chief Electoral Officer was taken to the Sask Party caucus. Well perhaps they threw a fit, perhaps they had strong words with the Justice minister, but we know that there was some serious backpedalling that occurred and the previous decision was reversed. And so an awkward position for the Chief Electoral Officer. He's currently serving as the Acting Chief Electoral Officer.

And, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, when the caucus, the Sask Party government caucus became agitated about the choice that the Justice minister had made — presumably they talked about it with the Premier, I don't know, but presumably — to me it's not a clear sign that they support an open process and a bipartisan process and a process that strengthens democracy.

So when we look at changes to 161, we know that there are some, in my view, some concerns about the approach, the philosophy that members opposite have when approaching matters of our elections Act.

We know there are many, many important issues in the province right now whether it be about royalty resource issues and what is a fair return to Saskatchewan people, whether it is about affordable housing and determining what steps government should take to ensure that there's an increased supply and availability of affordable housing for people in

Saskatchewan. We know there are environmental concerns. We know there are education concerns at the elementary, the primary, and the post-secondary sector. There's so many issues that are occurring right now that require the full input of Saskatchewan people, require a clear voice from Saskatchewan people on these matters.

And it's my concern, Mr. Speaker, that if Bill 161 is introduced, if the intent of having it introduced is to reduce the number of people who are able to participate in the democratic process, put up barriers or blockades or challenges for individuals who want to vote, Mr. Speaker, that's a concern to me. And it would be also . . . It is even a greater concern, Mr. Speaker, that if the people that the government is trying to prevent from engaging in exercising their right to vote, if those are individuals who had expressed concern with current government policies, that's even more troublesome.

We can think of issues around housing, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know that there are many individuals who have trouble finding a permanent address, and they may be involved in couch surfing in order to find a warm place. They may be in temporary accommodations throughout the province. And my question is how this piece of legislation would affect some of the most vulnerable that we have in our society. And to me that's a concern, Mr. Speaker.

And also other populations in the province, Mr. Speaker, who may not have traditionally had government-issued photo ID, if this provides a barrier for them to participate in the democratic process, I don't think that's a positive step either. I think that when considering matters of *The Election Act*, we should be looking for ways to strengthen and encourage all members of society to participate in the electoral process.

Mr. Speaker, so I have some reservations about this piece of legislation, and I have some questions about the motives of members opposite in introducing this piece of legislation because I think it may not be necessarily aimed at sound public policy or a sound approach to increasing electoral participation by society. But it may, Mr. Speaker, in fact be a way that members opposite feel they can control the electoral process and prevent those individuals, whom they may not appreciate how they have to vote or want to vote, from participating in a free and fair election.

So those are my concerns, my initial concerns, around Bill No. 161, Mr. Speaker. And I know members on my side, other individuals, have similar concerns as have been voiced. And I know many people in the community are also concerned about how this piece of legislation may affect their ability to participate in the electoral process.

So I think there are some real concerns about this legislation. I question the motives for its introduction, Mr. Speaker, and I question the track record of members opposite on the issue of elections as evidenced by the political games that were played by the caucus with respect to the selection of the Chief Electoral Officer. So I'm not especially comfortable with taking them at face value that this piece of legislation is well intended for all Saskatchewan people. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude my remarks and adjourn debate on Bill No. 161. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 161, *The Election Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

[14:45]

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 Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In many ways, my contributions will bookend the contributions of my colleague from Saskatoon Massey Place very well as he was talking about Bill No. 161 which sounds very similar to No. 162, *An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*. And these two Bills are hugely, hugely important.

And we see right across the world how people value democracy and how critical it is. We watch the events in the Mideast unfold and we saw them in the new year. And we are watching the tragic events in Libya as the rebels are under attack from the government, and we see how the UN [United Nations] is struggling to come to terms with their role as international peacekeepers. And yet people, citizens, the good citizens of Libya are paying the brunt of this inaction.

And so when we talk about democracy here and we think about these pieces of legislation before us today, we think how big of a deal could it be. It's a huge deal. People are dying around the world because of what we hold near and dear to our hearts here. And sometimes just the simple actions of what a government can introduce can have a huge impact. And we've been really focusing a lot; the media's been focusing a lot around the idea of photo ID.

And it's something that I've really come to appreciate over the last few years in Saskatoon where somebody pointed out to me, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you realize it, but at one point it was easier to vote for the mayor of Saskatoon, easier to vote for the mayor of Saskatoon than it was to get a library card, to get a library card. Can you believe it? And people just had to go in and swear that they were a citizen of Saskatoon and they were only going to vote once and they were able to vote for the mayor. But to get a library card in Saskatoon you had to have photo ID. You had to have photo ID. And so here we have the same sort of logic. And I think that for many of us, we truly don't understand the challenges around ID. We take it for

granted.

I'm very fortunate having lived in the same place. My ID comes on a regular basis every five or seven years from SGI. In fact I get the photo part of it free because I happen to have lived in the same place for that many years, whereas others, it's a huge, huge challenge. It's a very hard challenge. It's not an easy one to overcome. And there are costs to it, and the costs to those folks who are finding barriers to it are pretty significant. They're not easy to find 25 or 35 or \$50. You know, even a birth certificate we think of as pretty straightforward. They've been mailed out when your child was born, and not so any more, so not free.

And I think this is something that we have to come to terms with, but I think that we have to really rethink this. And I know that as we struggle with photo or ID fraud — a huge issue — and the move a couple of years ago to get to a super ID especially to get into the States, what we wanted to do was get some sort of way to get into the States so that we'd have some . . . one piece of ID that would solve all the problems. I know we can go too far, but somewhere in the middle there's got to be some reasonableness that people in Saskatchewan have some ID that they can go to vote and they can expect that that will happen.

But I want to back up a bit, Mr. Speaker, because what I really have found with the problem, with Bill 162 and so many of the Bills, is really around the consultation aspect of it — a Bill like this that's so important. I understand usually the two parties, the opposition and the government . . . And I think in the last go-round we even had the Liberals involved. Even though they had no sitting members in the House, they were invited to participate in the discussions around how can we make this Bill, the changes to *The Election Act*, better than it was before?

And I think that's a very worthwhile goal and we should always strive to make our legislation as responsive as possible so that people, when they go through an election, we can learn from that. And we should have those consultations and we should be able to change. I don't think any legislation, particularly when it comes to election, should be carved in stone.

But there are a couple of ideas that I really wanted to talk about and I think, I was hoping that the venue would come up, but it's never come up. I know in Saskatoon one of the big challenges — and I am very serious about this — are paid election signs on lawns. We're seeing more and more that signs on lawns, people are often offered 20 or 25 bucks if they could put up a sign on the lawn. Now that's not against the law. There is no law saying you can't take 20 bucks. No, but it should be called a paid election sign and there should be a category that says I have spent . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm creating some interest on the other side, especially from the member from Moose Jaw. I don't know whether he does it or not. He seems to be an expert in this area of paid election lawn signs. I don't know.

For me it's a commitment of whether or not you support your local candidate. It's not about whether you get 20 or 25 bucks. Maybe that's something they do over there. I don't know. But for me it should be a category of expense. I have spent . . . Maybe he spends 1,000, \$5,000 on lawn signs at 25 bucks a shot. I don't know. But I understand that that was happening in

Saskatoon where people were being offered . . . to say, listen, can I put a lawn sign up in front of your house and I'll give you 25 bucks? Why not? But it gives the impression that there's an endorsement, and there's no endorsement. It's just a simple business transaction. But there is no category for that expense, no category and no way of tracking. Was there a way? Were people paying more money out for that type of thing?

And then connected to that, Mr. Speaker, was . . . In many ways we see this now, particularly in municipal elections, in provincial and maybe in the federal election that may be coming up, how municipal bylaws are enforced around lawn signs. I don't know what happens but it seems the people take a bit of a holiday when it comes to enforcing municipal bylaws around lawn signs that aren't on private property. Why is it they stay up for a couple of days, a week or so? I don't know, but I think there should be a role in provincial government saying, listen, if there's an issue around people breaking bylaws because of provincial election, we'll pay the extra expense to make sure those signs come down right away so there's no unfair advantage to anybody.

I think that would be a reasonable inclusion in this Bill, but we were never asked. We were never asked. Nobody asked us. So what do you think? What do you think? This is designed completely from the point of view from the Sask Party government, what works best for them. And it seems from the response I got, they kind of like to pay people for the lawn signs and they have no problem with that and they have no problem not helping out the bylaw enforcement officer to make sure those signs come down right away.

So, Mr. Speaker, clearly we probably should debate this issue more. And maybe the members opposite will bring forward a Bill regarding the lawn signs during election time. I hope they do. I hope they get on that right away.

But so we have a problem with the process. We weren't asked, the political parties weren't asked, what do you think? What could we do to make elections better and more fair in Saskatchewan? You know, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we understand that many of the stakeholder groups weren't asked. And this was a bit of a surprise to them when they saw this in the fall, that all of a sudden there might be some changes, some changes coming down the line, particularly when it comes to ID. And we saw a group in Saskatoon that had to hold a press conference and put out their concerns.

And you know, but now there is a process and I didn't realize this until last week. And you know, this is something that happens where we keep our ears to the ground, and I don't know how many members opposite know about the consultation that's going on, and ironically it's being led by the department, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs — not the Justice officials, who I would think would normally be in charge of this. That's sort of the direct line. It's through Justice, not through Municipal Affairs.

But I understand there is a role for Municipal Affairs because some of these things impact that. But why would a junior ministry like Municipal Affairs or in this case . . . Because actually Municipal Affairs has a very important role, but when we're talking about provincial elections, you'd think there'd be

some profile, some advertising on this. Because people have heard about it in the news. It's already out there. It's not just something for stakeholders.

It's something that the public has a lot of interest in because they're very concerned around the idea of what will happen when they go to vote, and what kind of expectations will the returning officers or deputy returning officers have when they go to their local poll? Will they be up on all the new regulations? Will they be in the know? I don't know. Because the way this government operates, there's some people in the know and other people are left in the dark. It's just the way they operate. They just operate that way, and somebody will get the memo and other people will not get the memo. And we feel that it's got to be better than, it's got to be done better than this.

We see last spring when this government ran through legislation, particularly around the wildlife habitat legislation. They were saying, oh yes, everybody knows. Everybody knows. Everybody's been consulted. That, they were not.

An Hon. Member: — Even the ones that were named were not.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, in fact the ones who were named were not even consulted. And then so they were left kind of in this odd position of, what do we do? What do we do? We thought we were respected stakeholders and we were left in the dark.

And here we have the same thing happening here. And I would really urge this government to do more public advertising, more education around this, because this is a huge, huge issue and it's an issue right across the board in terms of voters' rights to participate in what we value so much, this democracy of Saskatchewan where we've been able to say generally people have been able to vote. But that's not always been the case. And I think . . . And particularly in my riding where I have a few shelters.

The Salvation Army hostel is in my riding, and I know when it comes to voting this will be a challenge for them. Because the process last time was only one person from the hostel itself could swear only one other person in. And so there had to be equal number of employees as there was clients. And that was a real problem because clearly there weren't that many employees and it really became a bit of a bottleneck. How do you get all these people who want to vote, be able to participate, clearly had the right to vote but somehow weren't valued. So we have . . . We could have improved. We could have improved. But I'm not sure the direction here is what's happening here with this government in this legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know many people want to speak on this Bill and it's an important one. We have lots of questions when we get into committee, particularly about the consultation process because we didn't, you know, we haven't really been officially informed about this consultation process or invited.

This is one that they're doing through Municipal Affairs and it's going out to selective people who may or may not have got the letter. We understand it's pretty hit and miss. I don't know what the rhyme or reason, who got on the list and who didn't. I'm sure we'll hear all about it though, or maybe we won't. Maybe we won't. That's often the case is we won't hear about

it.

But we'll be asking questions in committee about how many stakeholders, how many individuals. Was there advertising on this consultation process? What's the deal with the photo ID? How are they going to ensure that people have the ability to get the ID that is required? And is there a way of ensuring that when the polls open that everybody that's working for Elections Saskatchewan is on the same page, that we don't have somebody thinking that, oh for sure you must have photo ID because, you know, it is named in the Act.

You know, in fact I'll read . . . It's page 4, section 20 when it talks about new sections 76 to 76.2. So just in case the folks at home aren't sure what we're really talking about, I wouldn't mind reading this, and I'll quote. The title of the subsection is:

“Evidence of identity and residence

76.2 An elector shall:

(a) provide to the deputy returning officer and the poll clerk the following evidence to prove his or her identity and residence:

(i) one piece of identification issued by a Canadian government, whether federal, provincial or local, or an agency of that government, that contains a photograph of the elector and his or her name and address; or

(ii) two pieces [and goes on, two pieces] of information prescribed in the regulations, each of which establishes the elector's name and at least one of which establishes the elector's address; or

(b) establish his or her identity and residence in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the regulations”.

So here you have . . . You know, it talks about the photo ID, but it uses the word “or” so you have a bit of an out. But I mean I'm . . . You know, when we get to election day and we have a deputy returning officer who feels that they have been studying up on their law, may not fully understand what “and” or “or” means and people are turned away in frustration, turned away in frustration. That shouldn't happen.

So as I said, we look forward to hearing about this in committee. I look forward to hearing more about the consultation process. I hope in the very short days that actually they do some advertising, because the days are going by here, to call for some public participation.

I don't know if they're just dismissing that out of hand, thinking the public doesn't really have much to say about elections and democracy here in Saskatchewan, and that they are consulting only stakeholders. And we don't know who those stakeholders are. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think I've put up the pieces that I wanted to.

[15:00]

I did want to talk about the lawn signs because I didn't get my

opportunity to . . . And it really is something that drives me crazy when I'm driving up 29th or along Idylwyld. And I don't see the bylaw enforcement officer anywhere. And I said, and I wonder where do these signs come from? Where are all these signs coming from? And I think that's a problem. It really is a problem because I don't mind if it says paid by the whatever party is, but they seem to imply something else. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of Bill No. 162.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 162, *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 160

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

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again it is truly a pleasure and an honour for me to have the privilege of entering into this debate on behalf of the fine people of Regina Northeast and to share with my colleagues here some of the thoughts that I have and some of the issues been brought to my attention on this particular Bill. Mr. Speaker, this is of course Bill No. 160, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this particular Bill pertains to a very important subject that affects our society and affects each and every one of us. And although maybe . . . And I'm as guilty as anybody else. I don't quite have a full grasp or a full understanding of what all this Bill impacts upon and what an important aspect and what really an important pillar it is that supports our society, is the rules of human kindness or human respect I guess you would say, as is outlined in the Human Rights Code.

And basically I think that's what it is, Mr. Speaker, is simply respect for each other and an understanding and a tolerance of each other. And though we may have different backgrounds and have come from different ways of life and perhaps have had different experiences throughout our life, we all have our rights to have a place in our society that is respected and is protected and that we can do so with . . . and live in this society without fear of being discriminated against simply because we maybe have different backgrounds or may be of a different experience.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, these amendments that have been introduced by the government, which when passed would dissolve the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal, and it would dissolve it in favour of having the cases heard by court. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are, I suppose, an argument that could be made for both the continuance of the tribunal. But I suppose

equally there are arguments that can be made for finding ways and means that would add even greater efficiencies to the system than the present system through a tribunal process, although there is something to be said about having more than one individual hearing the cases and then making the decision on those cases.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that is very important. And we must not lose sight of that, that we want to, I suppose, have the ability to have an understanding or an expertise in the hearings of these various cases as brought forward to the Human Rights Tribunal. We have people there that have had the experience and have the expertise and have the knowledge that will reflect the many different aspects of our society. And after all, Mr. Speaker, that is sort of the hallmark of what makes Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan. It's "from many people's, strength." Well, Mr. Speaker, that's what it is: from many people's. And that's what makes our society here, I think, extremely unique as . . . rest of Canada.

But I think Saskatchewan sort of holds a special place there because of the fact that we have a society that's so diverse. We have people from all over the world that have immigrated to this great province of ours, to this great country of ours and to our province and to our cities that make up Saskatchewan, and that continues on. And I think, Mr. Speaker, we are all the better for it. We're all the better for it because the diversities that come to our great province, that create our society, strengthens us. And I think we as a society benefit from that strength.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very, very important that when we do make any amendments, any changes at all to the Human Rights Code that we do so very carefully and that these are very thoughtful changes and that the proposed changes have been aired to absolutely everyone in this great province of ours and everyone's had the opportunity to express their thoughts and their concerns on the proposed amendments, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that's very important because, as I said, I think there is something to be said for a tribunal or more than one person hearing the cases as being presented rather than allowing the decision-making power into a hand of one individual, which raises some concerns. I'm not saying, Mr. Speaker, that there isn't ways and means to ensure that that is balanced and fair. And there may be a mechanism in place to be able to ensure that those decisions made by that individual are fair and are balanced and do represent the best interests of our citizenship and best interests of the individuals involved and of course the best interests of our society. But, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to do that. We have to be very careful when we make those changes. And we have to do so in a way that will ensure that we have exhausted every opportunity to identify any flaws that may arise when we disperse of the tribunal system in favour of having the cases heard in a court setting.

And the government I know has said, Mr. Speaker, that the Court of Queen's Bench will hear cases only when all other avenues to resolve have been proven unable to address the issue. And, Mr. Speaker, that is fine and dandy. But once again, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that we place in the hands of a very small group of people — in fact we place in the hands really of one individual — the decision-making process that can

affect really the way our society looks at a lot of the rules and regulations. And I think that, Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful. We have to be very careful that we don't move too quickly in that direction and we overlook some of the aspects of the advantages of having more than one person or a tribunal system doing the hearings. So I think, Mr. Speaker, we must be very careful.

And I also would like to know, Mr. Speaker, what the government proposes here that would replace the tribunal system but yet be the in-between, I guess you would say, before it gets down to the courtroom. What mechanism would be used to identify ways and means to resolve the issues, or what mechanisms would be exhausted before the issues would find its way into a courtroom atmosphere? And that, Mr. Speaker, has certainly not been made very clear to us by the government as to what mechanisms they would propose to use to ensure that every opportunity is truly exhausted before the case is moved into the courtroom atmosphere.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I've always believed this, that the court system is something that you only use, only use, only use as a very last alternative, that some mechanisms and every mechanism available to us to be able to address issues and resolve problems should be used before we end up in a courtroom atmosphere. Because I think, you know, the courtroom atmosphere doesn't lend itself well for the give and the take of opinions and issues.

And I think that, you know, it certainly would be an advantage, I think, for all people involved if we were able to arrive at a mechanism, a system that would ensure that there's fairness, there's balance. And yet, Mr. Speaker, that the process is done in a way that doesn't cause the cases to be strung out and to be left up in the air for not only days, Mr. Speaker, not only months, but years on end, that we would have a resolve that would be done as quickly as possible, but to ensure that that resolve reflects the fairness and the balance within our society.

Mr. Speaker, the tribunal was originally created as a replacement for the boards of inquiry which were appointed by the minister to review individual cases where the commission decided that they had merit or where the complainant was appealing a decision referred to it by the commission.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is the intent of the tribunal. It was to be there as a mechanism to resolve the issues that were being created. It was to take the pressure off and to replace the boards of inquiry . . . [inaudible] . . . appointed by the minister was there to be able to review the cases that were being presented and give the opportunity to the complainant to have this mechanism of appeal to a third body, to another body of individuals who would be able to hear the case, be able to weigh the issues and collectively come to a decision and a recommendation rather than leaving that powers in the hands of one individual, Mr. Speaker.

So I think, you know, I really like the idea of the tribunal system having the opportunity to have its input and to have more than one opinion and more than one set of eyes and ears addressing the issue as being presented. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that that does create a problem as far as backlog is concerned. I understand that that causes the system to slow

down, and we need to find the ways and means to address that. But at the same, Mr. Speaker, I think it's better to err on the side of caution than it is to err just for expediency purposes.

And this is what concerns me about these amendments, Mr. Speaker, is that they haven't necessarily been well thought out. They haven't certainly been . . . Amendments have been brought forward by the government after careful consideration and in due course of the government having the opportunity or taking the opportunity to do extensive consultations throughout the population — at least not that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker.

In fact I have yet to see any evidence of any consultations at all that the government has done, certainly with the stakeholders involved or any meaningful consultations that have been done that haven't been sort of directed. I understand whatever consultations, as limited as they may have been, were only consultations that were being directed by the government rather than open-ended, wide-ranging inquiry from the general public for their input into the issues to ensure that the recommendations and the amendments being proposed by the government are those that reflect the best interests of Saskatchewan people and for those people who find it necessary to use the human rights system, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes it would take months for the board of inquiry to be appointed, and particularly if the minister's office was having difficulty identifying a member of the bar that did not have a conflict of interest with one of the parties that was in the dispute.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was real movement afoot to speed up the process because actually it was being identified that the original process, process of boards of inquiry, was certainly not an efficient way of handling this. In fact and what we were seeing was just huge, huge waiting periods and backlogs — and I guess you call it waiting lists — and, Mr. Speaker, that certainly wasn't in the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

So the tribunal system was certainly an improvement over the boards of inquiry, and it allowed for the ability of the decision-making process to be in the hands of more than one person. So you had, you know, you had good input. You had good understanding.

I think also it gave the opportunity to have the tribunals comprised of people from different walks of life in our province, from different backgrounds and different experiences. And that, I think, enriched the value of the tribunals, Mr. Speaker, because it give them that expertise, that inter-expertise, that you simply won't find if it's narrowed down to . . . the issues are narrowed down, the complainants are narrowed down to a courtroom setting where one individual, a judge, will be making the final decision that will affect people's lives. I don't think it has the same richness as the tribunal system certainly did have, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Of course there was the delayed . . . And justice was a complaint as a result of having the boards of inquiry. And the tribunal was originally created in part to address these concerns. So, Mr. Speaker, there was certainly an improvement over the efficiencies and the effectiveness of hearing the complaints

under the human rights Act that the tribunals certainly addressed.

One of the concerns of course was the length of time it was taking the boards of inquiry to be gathered, the boards of inquiry to hold their meetings, to hold their hearings, to then in order to be able to make a decision. So it was causing a backlog or a drawing out of the process, Mr. Speaker, which we would hope that the tribunals certainly did address.

Now is there a more efficient way, a more effective way to ensure that these move even further and causes greater efficiencies within the system so that the hearings can take place in a more timely fashion so that the people in Saskatchewan who find themselves in need of using the process of the Human Rights Commission would do so and would receive a fair hearing, a balanced hearing, and do so in a timely fashion? Now, Mr. Speaker, that is certainly the goal.

But we must be very careful when we make those changes, when we move from a tribunal system to a courtroom setting that we actually achieve what it is that we hope to achieve here. And, Mr. Speaker, in order to do that, the government has already indicated that they will only use . . . The Court of Queen's Bench will hear a case only when all other avenues of resolve have proven to be unable to address the issues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what are all those other avenues? What avenues does the government propose to put into place that would address the issues, would be able to find resolve to the issues, would be able to find the common ground, would be able to find agreements between the individuals who are opposing one another before, before it would go to a Court of Queen's Bench? And, Mr. Speaker, that has never been made clear certainly to me. I haven't seen any evidence of what the government suggests it might do in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

And that's unfortunate because I think, Mr. Speaker, if that information was made available to not only the opposition, but if that information was made available to the public in general, it would go a long way to addressing some of the concerns that have been brought to our attention, the attention of the opposition, as to the results of what would happen if we move very quickly from the tribunal system to a courtroom system where one individual, a judge, would hear the case and make the decision.

There seems to be a void there, Mr. Speaker, of the government being able to provide that information, at least to the satisfaction of the opposition and certainly the satisfaction of the people in Saskatchewan, that would provide us that information and assurance and thusly give us the comfort of knowledge that there will be meaningful mechanisms in place to ensure that every attempt is made to resolve the issues, resolve the issues before it gets to the court system.

Because like I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I don't personally believe that the court system is the best atmosphere in which to resolve issues. I think it certainly limits the ability to negotiate. I think it limits the ability to compromise within the individuals who find themselves in that situation, Mr. Speaker. So I think that's unfortunate. And I wish the government would have made it a lot clearer as to what they propose would be the

vehicles that they would use to provide the opportunities to resolve the issues between the time the complaint is laid and before it arrives at the Queen's court.

Well, Mr. Speaker, many people have expressed concerns that the tribunal system takes too long to issue a decision on complaints referred to it. And that's true, Mr. Speaker. I think the ideal here would be to be able to not to have waiting lists, not to have waiting lists on the Human Rights Code, not to have waiting lists so that these issues as they come forward could be resolved in the quickest possible way. It's the best interest of everybody, not only as a society but of the individual's involvement, Mr. Speaker, the involvement in a case like this is something that hangs over their head. And it's very . . . it leaves you sort of that uncomfortable feeling of you don't know what's going to happen in the future here.

So it's an issue that I think we all in our society would like to see when they do arise and when it is necessary to have a third party make that decision as to whether or not there is a human rights violation here, that it is done so in a much expedient way so that it is in the best interests of all those who are involved to have it done as soon as possible. Saskatchewan people have the right to expect a timely resolve to their complaints, particularly when it comes to issues involving a deeply personal and emotional . . . and to go to the very core of who we are as human beings.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that, you know, the desire to have this moved forward in an expedient way is one that certainly the opposition would support because that is, I think, should be the goal of all of us in government is to ensure that Saskatchewan people receive the best of whatever it is they're looking for. In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, it's a settlement or resolve of an issue under the Human Rights Code.

And that, Mr. Speaker, really is part of the rules that govern us within our society, that govern us within our province, govern the rights of each and every one of us — yours, mine and everyone else who is a citizen of this great province of ours — certainly should enjoy the comfort and knowledge that they have a Human Rights Code that will protect them and ensure that their rights are upheld.

And when we find ourselves in circumstances that we find perhaps an infringement upon those rights or infringement upon a citizen of Saskatchewan's rights as far as the Human Rights Code is concerned, then I think it is a desire to have that resolve achieved as soon as possible. And if there is a way of doing it, Mr. Speaker, that is even more efficient and more expedient than the tribunal system, I'm certainly in favour of that.

My concern here, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that there is a balance, and ensure that the rulings put forward do truly represent a fair and equitable resolve to the issue being presented; that, Mr. Speaker, I am not comfortable on suggesting that a courtroom atmosphere is the mechanism to use to arrive at that. I do not believe that, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that there needs to be the opportunity for give and take. There needs to be the opportunity for negotiations. There needs to be the opportunity for individuals who find themselves in this particular situation to be able to address their issues through compromise and through perhaps even clearing up of

misunderstandings.

And that is what I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that we would see the government move forward to, to ensure that there would be some mechanism that would: (a) increase the efficiency within our systems, but to do so in a way that ensures that we continue to have fairness and have balance within the decision making that's being rendered in human rights issues.

The human rights tribunal, you know, was set up as an independent quasi-judicial provincial body that adjudicated the human rights complaints under *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. And, Mr. Speaker, that certainly, certainly is a system that we need to continue on in this province. We need to continue it. And I know that the government's desire, at least as I understand it, the government's desire here is to move forward and introduce a system that's going to cause even greater efficiencies and speed up the system and reduce the backlog, and that I would certainly support and that I would applaud.

My only concern, Mr. Speaker, is I haven't seen any evidence of: (a) what system the government plans to put into place that would address the void that I see between the complainant having a concern and having that heard in a Queen's Bench court. There needs to be some mechanism put into place that would address that in-between, Mr. Speaker, so that we have ways and means to resolve these issues before they get to that court setting. So I think it would be in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan if we were able to provide that opportunity to those people find themselves in that situation.

Mr. Speaker, just a couple of more points before I conclude my remarks here. It's often been suggested, I guess you would say, that the backlog is something that needs to be addressed here. And that is, I think goes without saying.

But my concern would be, Mr. Speaker, is what has the government done as far as being able to carry out a reasonable amount of consultations that would support the recommendations and the amendments that the government is putting forward here. And, Mr. Speaker, I think what is important in any of this process, in any of this process, what is important is that the government gets it right. I mean this is changes to the Human Rights Code.

This is something that is very, very important to the fundamental principles that govern our society, the fundamental principles that govern our actions within that society. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it should be enhanced and we should be looking at educating our population, particularly the younger ones coming up as to what is meant by human rights and how each and every one of us in our society has a claim to our society and has the rights within our society. That needs to be protected and when necessary that protection be enforced.

But, Mr. Speaker, in order to do that we need to talk to the stakeholders that are involved. And I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, what level of consultation did this government do? Did this government do any consultations, first of all? Did they do any consultations in regards to this particular issue and the amendments that they're proposing? If so, who did they consult with? If so, when did this consultation process take place and over what time frame did it take place?

The next question I would have, Mr. Speaker, of the government is what method was used to consult? Did they hold public hearings? Did they give everybody in Saskatchewan the opportunity and the — which I think they should have — the right, Mr. Speaker? They have the right to the opportunity to participate and to express their opinions, to express their thoughts on this particular issue because I think this is a very important issue. It's not just something that we can brush under the rug, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's very important because once again I do believe that the Human Rights Code is one of the pillars that support our society. It's one of the pillars that holds up the goodness and the rights of our society and all people within that society. And I think, Mr. Speaker, when you make changes to the Human Rights Code, you have to make those changes very carefully, very thoughtfully, and you have to make those changes only after you've given the people of this great province the opportunity to express their thoughts and to share their opinions on those amendments. And I don't see, Mr. Speaker, that this government has done that. In fact I have yet to find any evidence of any level of true consultations.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there was some, there was some, I would say, call it secondary consultations that was done by officials of the government. And it was done through a mechanism not offering the people of Saskatchewan to come forward and without encumbrances offer their opinions and their thoughts on the matter and make recommendations as to what they would see changes within the Human Rights Code. Rather, Mr. Speaker, I see them, as I understand it, the consultations that were done, as limited as they were, were done, were really guided consultations.

It was sort of after a policy was developed, then that policy was floated amongst . . . in front of, I should say, stakeholders and said, well what do you think? And the discussions were limited to the policy that was developed rather than being open and rather than having it opened up, the whole issue opened up, so that the stakeholders and the people of this great province would have input into all aspects and all changes and all the amendments that would be proposed by the government.

[15:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, once again I think this government has failed in doing its consultation, as it's becoming more and more noted, Mr. Speaker, through not only this Bill, but many other Bills that we've had the opportunity to debate in this great Assembly. That this government seems to fear consultation, seems to fear the idea of going out there and listening to the people of this great province and getting feedback from them.

And I don't know why, Mr. Speaker, because I would think that the role of any government, the role of any government and the desire of any government would be to create legislation and regulations and rules that govern our society that are in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, and that are clearly and thoughtfully proposed by the people of this great province.

And in order to do that, Mr. Speaker, you have to go out and talk to the people of this great province through, and I think in this particular case it warrants, through a public hearing process

where hearings all across this great province, in every community, in every corner of Saskatchewan, would allow the people who are interested, allow the people who have concerns, allow the people who are affected, the stakeholders in particular, that would give them the opportunity to come out and, in a public forum, be able to lay out their thoughts and their plans and to share them with the officials of the government.

That could then be brought back to government in a manner that would allow the government to make the best possible decisions on amendments to the, in this particular case, the Human Rights Code, and to do so in a way that would end up providing a product that is in the best interest of Saskatchewan people. I think, Mr. Speaker, that is what we all desire. I know that the difference in the political parties often, Mr. Speaker, is the vehicle or the road we choose to reach that particular end. And we can have that differences and we can have the debates over whether this — my road or my proposed road or their proposed road or their methods or my methods — are the better ones. That's the debate we can have, Mr. Speaker.

But at the end of the day, at the end of the day we should have, as the hallmark of our efforts here in this great Assembly, is to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan are left with, our deliberations are left with the best possible legislation, rules, and regulations that govern our society that we as human beings can put together. In order to do that, we have to listen to the people of this great province. We have to, I think, on very important issues such as this one here, public consultations, public hearings should be done. And I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker. I see that the government has not chosen to do that, but rather has brought in these amendments who we do not know if anyone in this great province have had really any input into it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think in my brief time here, I've had the opportunity to outline very briefly some of the concerns that I have with this particular piece of legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, with that I know that many of my colleagues have a lot more to say about this and will want to debate this to a further end. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Northeast has moved adjournment of debate on 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.

Bill No. 147

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise and join the debate on Bill 147, *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*. I think it's interesting timing that this Bill comes forward. And

we can go back and look at the current government's handling of some of the issues that have come to the attention of the official opposition. And when employees bring concerns forward, whether they're, I guess, a law that's being broken, a policy not being followed, it's very clear that some employees, Mr. Speaker, want to be protected if they come forward. And they should feel that way. They're representing the people. They're trying to do the best job they can and many people that are out there working for the government in different areas and professional areas that they chose to work in that field. They want to be protected if they're bringing concerns forward and they see things or they're questioning things. They're not sure — maybe it isn't clear — but they want to bring it forward.

And unfortunately we've seen this government's handling of some of the information that's brought forward to the opposition and how the government handled that. It's very concerning, very concerning that now they want to come in with a type of Bill that would protect whistleblower, someone bringing information forward to the opposition.

Whether it's a, I guess, a legal matter or just not following policy, like I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear. People want to . . . and the guilt that they must feel. And I can only imagine. You have a family. You have a mortgage. You're trying to make a life for your family. You're a hard worker. You're a law-abiding citizen. You're doing the right thing. You might've been working for the government or working in an agency or a Crown corporation or one of the ministries for years and years, devoted, because you care about what you're doing.

And then to have a government, I guess, come forward and do what they did, when we've seen information that comes forward and how that information is brought forward, because it embarrasses the government of the day, well that's not right. Individuals, workers, have a right to be protected. And they have a right and an obligation to bring that information very clearly to the opposition or to whoever they want to, to disclose that information without feeling fear, anxiety because they feel like they're being attacked.

That a ministry or whether it's a minister or any one of the officials would go after somebody in any ministry, Mr. Speaker, it's bizarre that in a day like this and the time — and we are supposed to have evolved, to give people protection — we have a government, their own record, the way they handled things, very clear. The public have seen it. You can't hide that. You have a history. You can't hide that.

People are nervous, even to this day. They're nervous to bring things forward. Why should someone be worried to bring anything forward if it's something, whether it's policy being breached . . . You know, very clear. Very clear that there should be protection for those employees to bring the information. But you have a government of the day that wants to say, no, you're not going to do that because we don't want to be embarrassed. We want to make sure we keep everything hush-hush. Why?

Now they want to come out and introduce a piece of legislation that's supposed to give some protection. How about the employees? And have there been employees, and the ones that did come forward, how have they been dealt with, Mr. Speaker? How've they been dealt with? Not very good, not good at all.

They didn't come out too good under the Sask Party's, I guess, administration. They haven't done so well. They went after a few people, and some people lost their jobs. And I mean they may think it's all right to do that, put a little scare out there in the people. It isn't right.

If there's something done wrong that's done, whether it's a policy, whether it's a law that's been broken, the employee should have a right to come forward and not feel fear, bully, to be bullied. Why should someone feel like they're being bullied or have fear? And, you know, when you think about it, we talk about our education system. We make it very clear, talk about anti-bullying legislation. We try to protect so people are not bullied, pressured, fear for losing their job, their income.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that stuff happens and it's very clear it's happened. We witnessed some of it over this last, I guess, since the Sask Party has taken office. I have witnessed it myself sitting here. There was some interesting things going on.

So when they want to come out with a Bill that's going to protect whistleblowers, the employees, and good employees, very loyal, but maybe that employee doesn't look at the same philosophy of the current administration. So you know what? They do a little digging, little digging more. They go after individuals. Where did that information come? Who leaked it? Doesn't matter if they found the guilty person; doesn't matter if they found the person that reported it. They go after whoever. They're going to show, they're going to show the people out there that have worked for their ministry and for the government, if you do this, here's what's going to happen.

So don't tell me that's not being a bully. Don't tell me that's not putting fear in people. It is, and it isn't right. Nobody deserves that when they've got their family and they're working hard; they're trying to make ends meet. And if that was reversed on anyone else to feel like, Mr. Speaker, that a Bill like this, 147, to protect them?

It's interesting to see this Bill come forward now and the way it's being presented. You know, they want to believe in having a commissioner, and they talk about a commissioner. That commissioner will be responsible. But we've seen what they've done with some of the independent officers of this legislature, with their recommendations and what they brought forward. They haven't acted on.

So I mean there's questions about the different things that they're willing to do to keep things under wrap, to keep the public not knowing everything so that they don't know. It's interesting that, at the end of the day, the people truly have to be worried about bringing information forward.

And we don't know how many are out there, Mr. Speaker. There may be a lot of people out there right now that want to share stuff, but they're nervous. They have a mortgage. They have family. A lot of people aren't feeling the boom. They're just trying to make ends meet for their family. A lot of people aren't feeling the economics and the benefits that others are seeing. Not a lot are seeing that. There's very, very few that are seeing the economic success. And it's frustrating to watch. They're just trying to make ends meet.

And you look at them. And they look at the cost of living. And some of these people might be renters. They're just getting into it. And they're looking at their job. And they have children, and they want to make sure that they have a good living for their family and provide for them. But they're nervous. Do I bring this forward? In light of what the past practice has been of the Sask Party government, some individuals will not bring that forward because of fear, and that isn't right.

And you can come later and bring in some legislation that's going to give them protection should they . . . And they might be able to go to an individual with one of the ministries and report this. Well I don't know about that process, who that individual will be that . . . And who's going to pick and designate which individual in the ministries will this person go to and express their concern, whether it's policy, law? I'm not sure that I would want to, seeing their record on how they deal with people bringing information forward for the public. And the public has a right to know what's going on and you shouldn't hide it from them.

And you can throw stuff around and mix things up all you want, but at the end of the day, when it's a person's job, their income and their family, and they fear. And I say that it's not a nice thing to have someone working for a government ministry or agency or Crown corporation that's living in fear. The stress that's working for an agency that gets funding from the government that's supposed to be responsible for different agency — whether it's the CBOs [community-based organization] or there's many other agencies that get funding directly from the government — those individuals that work for those agencies out there, will they have that same protection? And we can see that some organizations have had their challenges with individuals.

[15:45]

And they weren't sure how to bring that information forward. Caused some individuals lots of stress. And some people, you know, unfortunately they're stressed so much that they have to go on sick leave. The pressure that's on them, it affects their health. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's unreal to think that now, after individuals have experienced this, to trust legislation that's going to protect them now.

And the process that they're bringing this in, a commissioner will hear it. And if people feel confident, depending, I guess, how this individual's selected, and we've seen some of the challenges and the direction that the government, the administration of the day, is willing to go and what they're willing to do. The pressure they're willing to put on.

And we talk about trust. Trust is a big thing. It's huge. People want to feel like when they come forward and they share stuff, they want to trust that whoever they're sharing their information with, whether it's breach of policy, maybe it could be as far as a criminal situation where the law gets involved, they want to feel protected that they bring that information forward.

Or they want to alert the opposition of some of the stuff going on that maybe isn't so up, up, that the public should know about, you know. There's different circumstances, and there's no one side. Everybody has a past, yes. You know, nobody's

perfect. You learn from your mistakes. But I think people are wondering truly where this is coming from.

And you look at their record already, and this government has done some interesting things and they've gone after some employees. And I don't know. I won't want to get on individual cases at this time, Mr. Speaker, but I want to be very clear that there's people out there that live in fear. They live in fear. To say to them that they have nothing to be worried about, about bringing that stuff forward, that they aren't feeling the anxiety of losing their jobs, their family . . .

And like I was saying earlier, some people may have years and years that they have served and they might have been the best employee that that ministry, Crown corporation, or government agency has ever had. But, unfortunately, because they have some information they would like to share or bring forward, and whether they share it with the opposition, whether they share it with the opposition or any other member, they shouldn't have to feel the fear that somebody's going to go back and go after them because they brought something forward that the public has a right to know. There are some things that the public has a right to know and nobody should be hiding that from them.

This legislation that they're bringing in might make some people feel, well maybe they can move forward, and they might want to come forward. And if this passes, we don't know — will there be protection for those individuals? You know, if they bring that information forward, if this Bill should pass, will they be protected? Some people would feel not, that they would not be protected.

And I hear the opposition members. They have their say. Well they had their say. They had people bring information forward, and look what they did with it. Look what they did with that. Information was shared. The public got . . . Look how they handled it. And now they want to criticize. Well I think, Mr. Speaker, very clearly, very, very clearly, they can criticize all they want, but they should look in their own backyard and how they've handled the situation . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, there you go. Look in the mirror. Have a look.

So, Mr. Speaker, I mean very clearly, Mr. Speaker, very clearly, people live in fear. In fear. Fear of some of the stuff that's going on by this administration. And you know, you can go around and say whatever. They don't like what I'm saying? That's too bad. That's the fact. It's too bad. It's too bad. Well you know what? There was a process that went on and right now I don't see the process happening. And they want to say that this is going to protect the employees. Well I'll tell you there's a lot of employees out there won't feel so protected by this Bill bringing forward.

And you could talk about the process, Mr. Speaker, that they may bring their complaint to somebody that's identified in the ministry or they may go to a commissioner. What strength will that commissioner have? Because we've seen how some of the recommendations that the independent bodies we use at this legislature to do the work we ask them to do, they brought recommendations forward. How did the current administration handle their recommendations?

So there's a lot of stuff going on and a lot of people out there,

and I think as time goes on, elections coming forward, people are going to share information. People are going to share information. And they want to make it very clear that the official opposition may be the ones that they want to share it with, not just to make sure that it's a certain government that you only share it with the government, so that the government of the day, so that they can keep it under — I don't know what you want to call it — keep it very clear, away from the public because they're going to handle it so that it doesn't embarrass them; we don't have any situations. And that's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because I think we're going to see more stuff coming out. And it will come out.

And I think people are going to say they've got to do the right thing, even though they're stressed. I encourage them. Come forward. Bring your concerns forward. And I know you might have to worry about having this administration coming after you, but the guilt and maybe the stress you're feeling . . . We will protect you. We will try to protect you. And they want to say this Bill's going to do that. I don't see it yet. I think there's going to be a lot of discussions and people are going to wonder. And whether it gets introduced or not, we'll have to look at it and we'll have to see how people . . . And do the employees feel protected? Because at the end of the day, it is the employees with their families. They're only trying to do the right thing. We pay them and we ask them to do the right thing. And at the end of the day we hope, we hope that this body and the legislature and the members do the right things. We do the right thing for the people that we serve and the public.

We look at all the different people that work for the government. There's many of them and they try to do an excellent job. And when they see things happening, they want to bring that information forward. And they have a right, and I think they have an obligation, to bring that information forward for the public. The public has a right to know and nobody should interfere in that process. Not the Sask Party government, not any government should interfere in that. There is a process.

I don't know how much teeth, how much teeth this Bill will have for the commissioner. Will he have the teeth that he needs to protect him and to make sure that he protects the employees? Or is it going to be somebody who clearly, Mr. Speaker, goes and shares that information with somebody from the ministry? And then they're in fear anyway of what's going to come down because of what they've shared, whether it's breach of policy, whether it's law, and there's a lot of different things going on.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition, the official opposition is used for a reason. People share. And you know, they share stuff that they want the official opposition to bring forward. Because at the end of the day, the official opposition has a job to do, and they will do that forward. And they want to share that information.

And I know the government of the day doesn't like that those individuals, employees, will share that information whether it comes in little envelopes, it comes anonymous. And I've told some people, Mr. Speaker, if you have concerns, put it in an envelope. And if you're that fearful of this administration, then do it anonymously if you can for fear of your family, your health, your financial. Put it in an envelope and send it forward. We'll deal with it.

And that's pretty sad when individuals have to send in stuff anonymous — fear of their job, of their family, their business. There's different things that could happen. And there might be a family business and maybe they're worried about that stuff. So I mean that must just, in their mind, snowball with all the different things.

So when I look at this Bill 147, *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*, I don't know how much teeth it will have for a commissioner. We don't know how that process will be developed, whether the individuals in the ministry . . . What kind of clout will they have? Will it be a supervisor? Does that individual share the philosophy of the current administration? Then I guess they would be happy. But if that individual was selected and doesn't share the same philosophy as the current administration, well they might have a problem with that. But unfortunately, you know . . .

Mr. Speaker, I know that a lot of my colleagues want to comment on this. And this Bill came up, and I know there was some situations, and this Bill's coming . . . It's interesting the timing of it. We're going into an election year, and it's the timing. All of a sudden they want to protect the employees. After their record and their past dealing with some of the situations are very clearly how they handled it as a Sask Party, as that administration has handled, now we're going into election year and they want to now come out with this, saying very clearly, we want to protect the employees.

I think the employees know. I think the employees know. And, you know, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I think the employees will speak very clearly. For the colleagues that have gone through what they had to go through because they have shared and disclosed information, they will support the employees out there. Their colleagues will support them. And I think they'll send a message to this government of the way they handled it.

And they could have handled it fine, but they chose not to. They had a decision to make. They made it. Now they live with that.

But very clearly, you know, I guess I know a number of my colleagues would like to comment on this Bill, and there's other Bills that will be debated. But you know, it's very clear the employees must be protected at all costs. When they disclose information about a breach of policy, whether there's something that needs to be shared, and even if they think that it's a breach of policy, even if they think it may be someone breaking the law, I think we owe them enough to say, bring it forward. If it's eating away at you, if it's bothering you, if it's causing you stress, then bring it forward. But if they bring it forward, they shouldn't have to feel fear that someone's going to come after them.

When I talk about that, to me it's a bully does that type of behaviour. And we have said no to that very clearly. You can intimidate people. You can bully. At the end of the day, the people have a right to be protected. And all members of this House should make it very clear that Saskatchewan residents, people that work in our beautiful province are protected. That should be very clear. But at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'm ready to adjourn debate on Bill 147.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

[16:00]

Bill No. 153

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

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to enter the debate at second reading on Bill No. 153, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010*. This legislation was first read on November the 15th of last year. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last, well since November the 15th, a number of members from the New Democratic Party opposition have spoken to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and some consultation outside of the Chamber has taken place. But as you will see from my remarks this afternoon, a number of things still are not very clear on the government's intent with regards to this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and that having been said, we'll require some further clarification on a number of these matters.

Back to November the 15th, Mr. Speaker. When the Minister of Justice introduced the legislation, he said a couple of things. And just for the record I'd like to quote from the Minister of Justice's second reading speech, Mr. Speaker, because it sets the tone for the legislation and my remarks that will come forward in a few minutes. So I quote from the Minister of Justice, three paragraphs from his November 15th letter, and I quote:

This Act will accomplish the following: repeal section 8.1 of the Act that established the civil division of the Provincial Court. It will allow Provincial Court judges from other provinces to be appointed as temporary judges in Saskatchewan when required to deal with a file where all Saskatchewan Provincial Court judges are in a conflict or appear to be in a conflict position.

It will reduce the waiting period for disability benefits for judges from one year to three months. It will require the Judicial Council hearing committee to disclose their report following an investigation into a complaint concerning the conduct or capacity of a judge, with certain exceptions allowed.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the third paragraph:

It will clarify how the Law Society of Saskatchewan appoints a replacement representative of the Provincial Court Judicial Council if the president of the Law Society is unable to attend. It will consequently amend *The Small*

Claims Act, 1997 to allow justices of the peace to hear small claims matters.

Mr. Speaker, it sounds, on the surface of it, to be a very simple piece of legislation. The key question, Mr. Speaker, when Bills of this nature come forward that members of the opposition have to ask, Mr. Speaker, the key question is, who is asking for these changes to be made? Why are these changes about to be made? It sounds good on the surface, Mr. Speaker, but as some of my colleagues have indicated in their remarks in the past, it's always the unintended consequence that we must look for when we are seeing something that appears on the surface to be pretty simple.

Mr. Speaker, one further quote from the Minister of Justice, his November the 15th second reading speech. About the middle of his speech, the Minister of Justice says, and I quote, "Mr. Speaker, integrity and transparency are fundamental to public confidence in the court and the administration of justice in the province."

Very key phrase, Mr. Speaker, from the minister's second reading speech. And I'd just like to give some . . . I'd ask the public to give some thought to those words, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice talks about integrity and transparency fundamental to public confidence in the court and administration of justice. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, anything that is done with regards to the independence of the court, Mr. Speaker, or the administrative function of the court, integrity and transparency are absolutely crucial. I agree with the Minister of Justice entirely. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice should also know that those words, integrity and transparency, must also be applied to the government of the province of Saskatchewan. Integrity and transparency, I could paraphrase, are fundamental to public confidence in the government of a provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of cases in this legislature over the last three and a half years, since the 2007 election that question, Mr. Speaker, those ideals of integrity and transparency. One in particular, Mr. Speaker, that we can't forget when we're thinking about those words for legislation like Bill 153 would be the wildlife habitat Act amendments that were brought forward, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of the Environment introduced that legislation making it very clear that consultations had occurred widely across the province — consultations with the Wildlife Federation, consultations with Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Speaker. And it wasn't very long after those words were spoken in the Chamber, that widespread consultation had occurred, that the very organizations named in the minister's speech, Mr. Speaker, came forward to say, we weren't consulted. There was no consultation. We had some conversations perhaps, but there was no consultation.

And as a result of subsequent conversations and some further consultation subsequent to that information becoming available, there have now been some changes, additional changes brought forward, Mr. Speaker, not to the full satisfaction of all of the parties. But, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about integrity and transparency in government, we can't forget that the wildlife habitat Act, Mr. Speaker, that was brought into this House, lacked both of those words in describing the way the government treated that.

And, Mr. Speaker, most recently we read in the newspaper the collapse of the Montana-Saskatchewan carbon sequestration project, Mr. Speaker, something that the government with, we assumed, much integrity and transparency announced in the rotunda of the legislature and said, we've got a deal here. Montana and Saskatchewan, great project for carbon sequestration, Mr. Speaker. They also added, of course, but it depends on money coming from Washington and Ottawa.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Washington and Ottawa said no funding coming, way back in October or early November of last year, Mr. Speaker, when the legislature was sitting. And only now in the month of March, after a member of the media stumbled over a fact, Mr. Speaker, does the minister responsible admit that when the legislature was sitting last fall this government knew of the collapse of this project and did not inform anybody about that, Mr. Speaker. Lack of integrity. Lack of transparency.

And then, Mr. Speaker, we all remember when the Minister of Health stood in the legislature and said, when he was bringing forward changes to the regulations about how hospital foundations could access addresses of patients for fundraising activities, the Minister of Health stood in the chamber and said he had consulted with the Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Speaker.

Well it wasn't hours later, the Privacy Commissioner puts out a letter indicating he had had no conversation with the Minister of Health. There had no been consultation whatsoever. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, there was a ruling in this Chamber holding the minister responsible for contempt of the legislature, Mr. Speaker. A ruling said there was a prima facie case, the principle involving the Minister of Health who was not properly forthcoming with his description of his consultation. Lack of integrity, complete lack of transparency in describing what a Bill is intended to be and what consultations have occurred regarding that.

So when the Minister of Justice says in his second reading speech introducing Bill 153, "Integrity and transparency are fundamental to public confidence in the court and the administration of justice in this province," he also must understand that integrity and transparency are fundamental to public confidence in the government of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we in the opposition are going to ensure, just as we held the government to account on those other matters, Mr. Speaker, we will hold the government to account on these matters in this piece of legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me go to comments that were made also on November the 15th by the member of the New Democratic Party who spoke first on this piece of legislation, the member from Regina lakeshore, a previous . . .

An Hon. Member: — Lakeview.

Mr. Taylor: — Lakeview. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the correction. Regina Lakeview, Mr. Speaker, a former minister of Justice in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and he had a number of things to say about this piece of legislation. But I'd like to quote briefly from his remarks. He talks about, he says, ". . . all of these administrative changes . . ." Now let me just make sure that *Hansard* gets this correct, Mr. Speaker. I am quoting from page 6046 of *Hansard*,

November the 15th, the member from Regina Lakeview said:

But all of these administrative changes that are here still go back to this fundamental question about who requested this particular kind of change. Is it the kind of request that actually comes from the judiciary itself? As I said before, there were recommendations from the provincial compensation committee around one specific clause. There was also request of change from the Law Society on another clause, but all of the other changes, there wasn't an indication of where the request was coming [from for these] . . . changes.

And then finally on that same page, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Lakeview says, and I quote:

So on the whole, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some appropriate needed changes, but for some of the main ones we need a better explanation of where this comes from and why. And we have to be extremely careful that it is not just a budgetary type of response coming out of the Ministry of Justice to deal with some of the financial issues that the government as a whole has, because ultimately those things, as they're vetted by courts at various levels, will be clearly identified as that. And they'll cause problems for our Ministry of Justice, but also for our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me to be fairly clear that some of the matters that the government identifies as housekeeping, matters that were brought forward by the Law Society, Mr. Speaker, or the judiciary themselves, have been thought through and are well-positioned for going forward.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the former minister of Justice suggests that we have to look at unintended consequence. And he also suggests that some of these matters may be stepping into or allowing the Minister of Justice to do things that previously have been done by the chief judge, administrative matters that are the responsibility and should be maintained within the judiciary or the Law Society that are now being taken over by the Minister of Justice. Administrative matters, Mr. Speaker, and we have to take a look at that. We have to look at that very, very carefully.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be saying a little bit more about this on the next Bill . . . We've got a second Bill that's consequential amendments to this one, Mr. Speaker. But this Bill also allows the government to appoint temporary judges currently serving on the bench in other provinces. The minister has said that this will address cases where the available judges on the Saskatchewan Provincial Court have a conflict of interest with one or more of the parties involved in a particular matter. This does seem simple enough, Mr. Speaker, but we need to ensure that there's clear understanding about when this gets done, how it gets done, and that sort of thing.

Mr. Speaker, a number of things in here that we're pleased to support, a number of things that we wish the government would stand up and clarify, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of integrity and transparency.

[16:15]

With that, with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge for the government that there are a number of other colleagues of mine on the opposition benches that would like to speak to this legislation before it goes to committee, and therefore I would move that debate on Bill 153 be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 153, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 154

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

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to second reading of Bill 154, Provincial Court amendment, consequential amendments, Mr. Speaker. This Bill does follow Bill 153, which I spoke to just a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker.

And I think we are all aware that consequential amendments mean that there's a main piece of legislation, and then there are subsequent legislation that relates to the first. So I will be fairly brief in my comments on this piece of legislation. I am interested in repeating a number of comments that were made by another member of the opposition earlier in the debate, Mr. Speaker, but I'll do that in a couple of minutes.

This Bill, 154, makes amendments to *The Small Claims Act* to allow the government to repeal the civil division of the Provincial Court and transfer significant responsibilities currently handled by Provincial Court judges to justices of the peace. There may be some merit, as I'll indicate further in a few moments, Mr. Speaker, there may be some merit in doing this in some limited cases. However there are potentially serious implications for the quality of service being provided to people appearing in court and for their right of a fair hearing.

We need to ask a number of questions, such as what functions are being transferred out of Provincial Court. What type of cases are going to be handled by justices of the peace? What is the potential impact on the service that people receive when they go to court? Will their rights be impacted? Whose rights will be impacted? Who stands to benefit from this change? And as I'd indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, who indeed actually requested that this change be made? Did it come from the judiciary, Mr. Speaker, or did it come from somewhere within the minister's office?

The minister in his second reading remarks back on November

the 15th of 2010 was very short, Mr. Speaker. In fact the minister's remarks are no more than three paragraphs in length, in which he outlines the couple of changes that are in the Bill. But he does not indicate at all where the direction for this legislation came from or what impacts it might have.

My colleague, the member from Regina Lakeview, a former minister of Justice, had a number of things to say, also on November the 15th, Mr. Speaker. Quite a bit of time has passed of course since November the 15th, and I'd like to put on record again some of the things that the member from Regina Lakeview had to say at that time because I think it's very pertinent to the debate and to the current knowledge that members would have, thinking about this Bill as it goes forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote a couple of paragraphs from the comments made by the member from Regina Lakeview at page 6047 of *Hansard*, November the 15th, 2010. Mr. Speaker, he says thank you to the Deputy Speaker in the Chair at the time, and I quote:

The minister had an opportunity to further explain where some of these requests had come from around this change. But clearly in the remarks as it relates to this particular Bill, No. 154, the minister has said that they will be using justices of the peace to do the work of provincial court judges in a number of areas where they have not traditionally done this work.

And one of the points made is that small claims cases obviously would be handled not by a Provincial Court judge in all cases, but by a Justice of the Peace. And this is a change. It's like contracting out work, I suppose, to another group of workers. It is important that the minister tell us if this is a request that is actually coming from the Provincial Court judges, the chief judge and their group, or if this is something that is being done as a administrative financial solution to the situation.

Because when it comes to the courts, the ultimate test is whether the citizens of Saskatchewan perceive that they receive justice and that they actually receive justice. I have a great deal of respect for the justices of the peace, but I know that there are many situations where the skills of a Provincial Court judge are required for solution of a number of the issues. And if this in any way causes members or citizens of Saskatchewan to have less faith in our court structure, then I think it's a problem.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Lakeview on November the 15th expressed those concerns. Mr. Speaker, a number of months have passed to today, Mr. Speaker, here in the middle of the month of March, and this matter has still not been clarified by the government of the province of Saskatchewan. The Minister of Justice, after several months after these questions or this issue has been raised, still has not clarified this very simple question: who requested these changes? Mr. Speaker, an important question to have answered before we move forward so that we in the opposition, members of the public, and in fact members within the justice system itself can have a full understanding of the context in which these changes are being brought forward.

We do know that there is stress in the small claims system that needs some attention. We do know that there are financial costs within the small claims systems that the government needs to address. And we do know that the Provincial Court judges have an interest in seeing some stress removed from the administrative side of the small claims system, Mr. Speaker.

So there are matters that legislation could address with regards to the administration of the small claims court system that can be addressed in a small claims Act of the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, these are important matters. Again, falls into the circumstances that in relation to the previous Bill 153, the Minister of Justice said, we need to have integrity and transparency in the system. Well, Mr. Speaker, in order for us to move forward on Bill 154, we need clarification, we need integrity, and we need transparency. That having been said, Mr. Speaker, it is a Bill on which not a lot can be said or argued until such time as there is additional information provided. Even consultation is difficult under these circumstances. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, knowing that a number of my colleagues are going to want to speak to not only Bill 153, but 154 which is in front of us today, I would move that debate on Bill 154, provincial court amendment, consequential amendments debate, be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 154, *The Provincial Court Consequential Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 157

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

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's today my task and my honour to speak on Bill 157, *An Act to amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*. This is a pretty elaborate Bill in that it takes some 44 pages just of explanatory notes explaining clause by clause and the existing clauses, and then what is coming up. But I don't propose to necessarily go through each of those clauses, Mr. Speaker. What I do propose to do is to capsule what I see this Bill, Bill 157, doing.

What it is, is a move to make all of the regulations for the oil and gas industry seamless, that is, easy — they have one-stop shopping, so to speak — and to have our regulations coincide with Alberta's regulations so that it is very easy for the oil and gas industry to go ahead and drill in Saskatchewan. And on the surface of it, that is great.

But I want to point out one of the things that really troubles me. This Bill, the government goes to great contortions to bend and

twist and make a pretzel out of itself so that the oil and gas industry can drill for oil and gas — something that they do every day in every way, not only in Saskatchewan, not only in Alberta, not only in BC [British Columbia], Manitoba, other jurisdictions in Canada, but throughout the States, throughout the world, throughout the entire world they do this, this oil and gas industry.

Anyway the government is twisting itself all out of shape to make it easy for the oil and gas industry — everything for the oil and gas industry, and nothing for people. What I mean by nothing for people is if you talk to, particularly, seniors that have seen their rents go from 500 to \$800 in the last two years, they wonder why there isn't some attention paid to that matter. Why all of the attention paid to oil and gas? If you were to talk to people involved in post-secondary education, they would wonder why isn't there a little more attention to post-secondary education, as opposed to a Bill that is lengthier than the explanatory notes — and they're 44 pages long.

Why is it that the government would spend so much time on *The Oil and Gas Conservation Act* . . . And by the name it sounds like it's a great idea. But one of the things that this Act does, Mr. Speaker, is it provides some regulation on how you would deal with . . . I want to get the term right, but it is with waste gases like carbon dioxide.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, two years ago in the rotunda, not 100 yards from where I'm standing, the Premier and the Governor of Montana stood and announced with great fanfare, the biggest fanfare they possibly could, a carbon sequestration project between Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Huge fanfare — I remember it. I remember it vividly. And that would . . . Well I mean history has shown that just died in the dark of night, just before this legislature came back to sit. No pronouncement at all that the carbon sequestration was going to disappear, that carbon sequestration project or program with Manitoba and Saskatchewan. And it had involvement with the Harper government and the federal government of the United States of America.

No mention of that cancellation, and yet now we see this talking about carbon dioxide as a waste gas. And it's just one relatively small part; it probably appears in various other places in the Bill too. But the focus of *The Oil and Gas Conservation Act* is not to deal with carbon dioxide. It is to deal with the oil industry and making things easy for that industry. And again I say, making it easy while costs escalate for regular people, for my constituents. We've seen two out of the three years that the Sask Party's been in government, we've seen natural gas prices charged to homeowners for home heating being the highest in Canada for two out of three years. And the gas is produced essentially in Saskatchewan. We produce more gas than we use here.

We don't restrict SaskEnergy to buy its gas from Saskatchewan only. Indeed a fair amount of it comes I understand out of Alberta, and it's all price dependent. But they would buy, I would assume when they're buying out of Alberta, it's because of a lower price than what they're able to secure in Saskatchewan. Surely to goodness we don't have SaskEnergy going to Alberta and paying a higher price for natural gas just so that the government can jack up the rates for homeowners for

our home heating, natural gas here in Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

So we're witnessing the worst of worlds for my constituents, for the people of Saskatchewan. We're seeing high rates of, high costs of natural gas for our home heating and other uses here in Saskatchewan, and yet we see a Bill designed to make it ever easier for the oil and gas industry.

You know, I filled up with gas this morning, gasoline coming from the oil that's pumped out of the ground. A buck twenty, a buck twenty for a litre of gasoline. A buck twenty, Mr. Speaker. I just don't recall it ever being higher than that here in Saskatchewan. But we see prices just escalating incredibly fast. There's no belief that diesel fuel is going to do anything other than go up over the next eight weeks as we get into spring seeding and farm families, farmers are out on the field and needing to fill their diesel tanks.

We see the oil industry that collectively we could call it the we can industry. You know, why do they charge a buck twenty a litre? Because we can. That's the best explanation I can come up with.

The alternative explanation I can come up with is one where the Premier had promised the people of Saskatchewan that there would be a cent a litre reduction in the Saskatchewan gas tax for every dollar that gasoline went above \$60 a barrel. Well it dropped to \$100 a barrel this morning. That was the report I heard on my way in — not 60 but 100. That's \$40 higher than where the Premier triggered, said that we should be providing relief on our gas tax for consumers as we fill up at the pumps.

Well you know, Mr. Speaker, I don't see that as being another promise kept for the people of Saskatchewan. I don't see that being a promise as it relates to oil and gas. I don't see that being a promise that is helping my constituents one thin dime, not at all. It's a promise totally ignored. It's something that is just . . . The silence is deafening on that relief, that that was a great idea when the Sask Party were in opposition, but when they're in government and can actually implement some of their great ideas, well what a difference a day makes when that day is an election day, and they move from opposition seats to government seats. What a difference a day makes.

So no tax relief on gas prices for consumers, whether it be gas for your vehicles, or diesel fuel for your vehicles, or propane for your vehicles, or also no relief if it comes to natural gas for your home heating needs and other needs. No relief at all. And yet in Bill 157, *An Act to amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*, we see a headlong rush to make it ever easier for the oil and gas industry.

Now you might get the notion that I'm opposed to the oil and gas industry, and that is absolutely false. We need industry, but we need things in balance. We need a government that will look after the people of Saskatchewan as well as the industry. And you can't have just everything for industry and nothing but cost increases for people. People eventually come to realize that the government is not on their side.

If we're in a boom time, a time of great prosperity, well you

know, seniors on largely fixed incomes aren't seeing that when their rents go from 500 to \$800 a month in the apartments, the modest apartments that they can rent in the north end of Regina. This is a \$300 grab out of their fixed incomes. And that means \$300 less to spend on food, food which is going up at a higher rate today than it has at . . . at a higher percentage rate today, food getting more expensive by the week. I don't want to overstate the reality of food costs, but food costs worldwide are just escalating at a unprecedented, high rate.

We have natural disasters. We've had unprecedented flooding in Australia that has really affected their food production and their ability to add food into the food chain, if you like, to export to much of the rest of the world. Now we have a situation in Japan that is less about food production and more about just a devastating, actually unprecedented, loss. Mr. Speaker, I've never seen anything like it. And indeed in members' statements, both sides of the Assembly recognized that with our lead statements that Japan is in crisis, well they claim the worst crisis they've had since the Second World War.

So we've got food prices escalating. We've got rents escalating at an unprecedented rate in Saskatchewan. And we have giveaways for the oil and gas industry just so that they can do business even better, even easier. I'm not opposed to making things more seamless and better for the oil and gas industry, but things should be seamless and better equally for my constituents, for the people of Saskatchewan. Things should be improving for them.

Earlier today in question period, we had some questions around wait-list times in health care. And you know, some pretty legitimate questions because it seems that wait-lists, what the government touts as a great success, isn't all such a great success.

The doctor retention, physician retention program is not the success that the government is touting it to be either. There is, well by way of explanation, out of the colleges, the universities that graduate doctors, there's 17 such universities in Canada, and the U of S is 16th out of 17 — second last. That doesn't seem to me that for physician retention that we have a lot to crow about yet in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Act* has amendments that will develop more efficient, transparent, and consistent compliance assurance and enforcement processes. And what does that mean? It means that in this legislation, the government is recognizing that there is a difference between enforcement and inspection. And that shows up in the explanatory notes many, many times, but what it means is we'll develop more efficient, transparent, and consistent compliance assurance and enforcement processes. Mostly what it means is we will issue blanket licences without too much checking to the oil and gas industry and what they're doing. Why? Because we are in this headlong rush to have more, more, more oil and gas wells drilled at any cost.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that there's a couple of reasons why the oil and gas industry is fairly excited and fairly happy to be doing business in Saskatchewan. One of the reasons is that if we were to set up an oil company, we'd drill and we hit either oil or gas, but let's go with natural gas. You drill and

you find natural gas, and it's in a producible amount. When we were in government, we guaranteed eight weeks we'd have you hooked up and your gas producing. We would have the pipeline to you.

In Alberta, the times of that same time was more like eight months and beyond. You were very lucky if you were able to drill a gas well and get it producing in anything under eight months in Alberta versus eight weeks in Saskatchewan. Huge difference. If I were part owner of — and I'm not — but if I was part owner of an oil company and I wanted to get into production, I would want my . . . I'd punch the hole, get the hole drilled, and get it tested. I would want it producing so I could get some of my cost of drilling back at the earliest opportunity. And that tells me Saskatchewan will be a great place to do business.

I want to just contrast that with a country that I had the honour of visiting some nearly four years ago now, and that was Nigeria, where at that time — and I don't know if it's still happening — but most of the oil and gas was produced on the delta area. And people were actually cutting into the pipeline and stealing the oil because the royalties were all taken to Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, and spent hugely on the military which was very well financed as opposed to program spending for people, Mr. Speaker. And there was this huge sense of desperation in an incredibly oil and gas rich part of the world, an incredibly oil rich area.

But the oil and gas industry were very concerned about it, naturally, because they would have their people out drilling and building pipelines and so on only to have pipelines damaged so that somebody could steal some of the oil and gas and then presumably resell it on their own. But the oil and gas industry was responsible for the environmental degradation in that area.

And I invite you just to go onto Google Earth, and there's a part of Google Earth where it talks about light pollution. I'm talking flares from gas, flares from oil, as well as cities give off a significant amount of light pollution. That light makes the area lighter. But if you go onto Google Earth, you will see that one of the areas of the world that has the greatest concentration of flaring of gas and oil is in Nigeria in the delta region.

We deal with it in a little different manner here. In the southeast part of the province, when we started really producing, finding ever larger barrels — well the Williston Basin, once we started tapping into that and started finding some gas, there was relatively short-term flaring that really bothered a fair number of us when we saw it happening. But what did the province of Saskatchewan do is try to, through SaskEnergy, through TransGas, build pipelines so that they could stop flaring and burning — that is burning off the gas and products — and bring them through a pipeline, produce them so that we could use that natural gas for industrial use and home heating and those sorts of things. So rather than flaring the gas, we used it.

And this was a situation where we had a Crown corporation that was at the ready, so to speak, to help make that gas collection system pay. It wasn't a case of one small gas producer having to build the entire line. It was a case of, you've got a product; others have product that is being flared, we can collect that and make it commercially viable with a series of collector pipelines

that get to an ever bigger pipeline, until we could produce that gas. That, Mr. Speaker, is really what gas conservation is about and its best utilization of the product that we produce here in Saskatchewan. And incidentally it's the best economic use of the product as well.

[16:45]

So in addition to the problem of pipelines being cut in Nigeria, Mr. Speaker, there was also an issue of workers being held for ransom. I'm talking oil and gas workers being held for ransom. Indeed while I was in Nigeria, there were two Canadian legislators that had gone, rented a car, and tried to go into the oil and gas producing area and wound up in significant trouble. And the Canadian Embassy just practically stood on its head to get those two legislators safely back in their hotel in Abuja. The embassy had advised them not to do what they were doing, but they were insistent in any event, but I understand it involved the Canadian Embassy chartering a special plane to go and pick these legislators up, and who knows what happened to the rental car. I didn't have to deal with it and nor was I asked to.

So, Mr. Speaker, oil and gas companies can deal in places like Nigeria that are wealthy in oil and wealthy in gas, but tend to have lawlessness and corruption as part of the regime. This is not something that we would use to characterize dealing with Saskatchewan. We would not characterize the government nor the department or ministry as lawless or somehow corrupt. Those are not terms that we use in Saskatchewan. I'm positive that the oil and gas industry and other industry would appreciate that. And I can guarantee you that, from my perspective, I absolutely cherish the fact that we do try and value laws.

We try and pass legislation that is good. We have a system, we have a system that allows us to . . . Typically a government proposed legislation, and typically an opposition asks questions around what that legislation does. And part of our job is to point out part of how a government makes choices, and that's really what governance is all about.

And in this case, the government has chosen to give to the oil and gas industry amendments that make drilling seamless, that make it very easy to drill for oil and gas. And while they've chosen, the government's chosen to do that, they have by definition chosen not to deal with the people of Saskatchewan, not to deal with rents that are escalating or a housing crisis where in Regina for at least three years now the rental rate has been at 1 per cent or less, which is essentially a full . . . every place is rented. One per cent is, that really is housing that absolutely needs to be dealt with on an emergency basis and fixed up before it could be rented again.

So the choices are fairly stark — choose to give everything to the oil and gas industry and, by definition, choose to do nothing for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is fairly complex, and I want to point out a couple of things about the oil and gas industry that I have not mentioned yet. One of the things I wanted to point out is that — certainly in the first two years that we have production numbers, first two years of the Sask Party government — oil and gas production actually fell from where it was when the NDP, under Lorne Calvert as premier, what the gas and oil

production was in our tenure.

Rents were lower in our tenure. I'm talking housing and apartment rents. Food costs were lower. Gasoline costs were significantly lower — well under two-thirds what they are today to buy a litre of gas at the pump. Many, many things were different.

And the world changes. That's just one of the realities of it. But I know in the second reading speeches the member for Kindersley, the minister responsible for this legislation, said that part of Saskatchewan being a have province is our regime of royalties and our ability to help the oil and gas and other industries work. But I want to remind people through you, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan became a have province not in 2008, the first full year of the Sask Party government. It became a have province not in 2008 but in 2005. In 2005 Saskatchewan was a have province and has been, has enjoyed that ever, has enjoyed that ever since.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud that in our time in government, our 16 years in government, not only did we cut the frills and pay the bills, but we gave our Saskatchewan back to the people. We eliminated deficit and debt accumulation every single year once we attained a balanced budget, which was our second full year of government. In every single year, we paid down the debt to some degree. Some years it wasn't a lot of debt paydown. But every single year, if you add the Crown corporation debt and the General Revenue Fund, those debts, add them together, and the debt was consistently down for 13-plus years under the NDP. We were really, really in a situation of huge expansion.

And people do what people will. And the election put us in opposition and the Sask Party in government, and that's the way a democracy works. But we had the economy going, firing on all cylinders, and I'm very proud of that.

There's one other thing I wanted to say that we did at that time. In 1992-93, which was our first year of our own budget — and this was still a deficit budget; it was our first year that was ours alone after the Devine Conservatives — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the percentage of program spending that we spent on Agriculture was 6.2 per cent of our total program spending, 6.2 per cent. The Sask Party government is very proud of its Agriculture budget, but I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's not 6.2 per cent of the total program spending. This year it was 3.9 per cent — roughly two-thirds of the Agriculture budget. If you want to compare an apple and an apple — I'm going per cent; I'm not taking into account inflation — but 6.2 per cent under the NDP for Agriculture, 3.9 per cent under the Sask Party for Agriculture, that is quite a difference.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the question, and it's a good question: what does that have to do with the Bill 157, *An Act to amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*? And, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what it has to do with it. This Bill is about giving away everything to the oil industry so that the oil and gas industry can drill in a seamless manner. But they get everything they asked for in this Bill, everything that they asked for, for the oil and gas industry, and nothing for farmers — farmers that, mark my words, two months from now when they're out in the fields, diesel fuel costs are going to be higher than they are today.

When farmers are desperate to fill their tanks, diesel fuel costs are going to do nothing but go up in the short term.

And I predict this government, that government there, the Sask Party government is going to sit on its hands and say, well it's the world economy and by gosh, Saskatchewan is prosperous, it is so prosperous that well it just doesn't matter that you're going to have some trouble getting your crop in, you're going to have some trouble filling your tractor with fuel so that you can seed your farm land.

It's not going to matter that your rent, for seniors in the cities or in the country, your rents have gone from 500 to 700 to \$800 a month. That doesn't matter. What matters is that the oil and gas industry get to do whatever it is they want to do, and they get to charge a buck twenty a litre for the gas. Now I see some of the government members are smiling at this, and it's good. I always try to be a little bit entertaining in my speeches, Mr. Speaker. But I tell you, it doesn't bring much joy on any of my constituents when they pull up to a gas pump and it's a buck twenty a litre. Three years ago it was what, 67, 68 cents a litre? It's a buck twenty now, buck twenty.

No joy in that, and the government sits on its hands. Even when they had a proposal when they were in opposition of how they were going to fix it, they had the proposal of how they would provide some help to my constituents and the people of Saskatchewan, but that was in opposition. Now they're in government. Now they're realizing, oh by gosh, being in government means it's about choices.

And we should choose to do things we can to make it better for the oil and gas industry to deal in a more effective way, environmentally sound, paying proper royalties, paying proper taxes, not only to the provincial government but to the municipalities, for heaven's sakes, Mr. Speaker.

I haven't even talked about the municipalities that want to make sure that they are heard. When an oil or gas company decides it's going to drill in their municipality, they want the opportunity to make comment on it. They want the opportunity to make sure that that oil and gas . . . They want to make sure that they are heard when it comes to local sensitivities, when it comes to environmental sensitivities, when it comes to making sure that we do it properly, to make sure that every bit of every unit of energy that's extracted from the ground in Saskatchewan is done as efficiently, as effectively — cost-effectively — and for the greatest benefit of Saskatchewan people and the industry as well.

We want to be partners with them, but we don't want to always have to turn the other cheek. We don't want oil and gas to get a Bill that takes 44 pages of explanatory notes alone and try and explain what we've done, what the Sask Party government has done for renters. Explain what you've done for renters in Regina Coronation Park. I can tell you . . . [inaudible] . . . nothing, Mr. Speaker. What have they done for people in Regina Coronation Park that fill up their vehicle with gasoline or diesel fuel? I can tell you . . . [inaudible] . . . nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I say shame on the government that is everything for one industry and nothing for the people of Saskatchewan. The people deserve to come along and get some of the benefits

of the prosperity that's happening. They deserve to get some of the joy out of things that seem to be happening in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan people deserve to have a government that's on their side, that will stand up for them and with them, not just for them, but with them, arm in arm. Share the good times. Share the bad times, but be of the people. That what's Saskatchewan people want, Mr. Speaker.

I have some concerns around this Bill 157, *An Act to amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act* . . .

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

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

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