



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
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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
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Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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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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Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
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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 Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Hermann Sitz. Mr. Sitz is the consul general of Germany, based in Vancouver. And he is with us today along with the honorary consul here in Saskatchewan, Ms. Barbara Hoggard-Lulay. This is Mr. Sitz's first official visit to Saskatchewan and it has provided the government an opportunity to discuss the relationship of Saskatchewan with Germany, to explore future opportunities and to see what potential exists between improving our good relationship that exists between Saskatchewan and Germany. And I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming the consul general of Germany to this Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to join with the Deputy Premier in welcoming here today the consul general from Vancouver, the Federal Republic of Germany's Hermann Sitz who is with us here today. We had the pleasure of saying hello earlier. And Mr. Sitz is joined by Saskatchewan's honorary consul to Germany, Ms. Barbara Hoggard-Lulay, and we are truly honoured to have both of them here today, Mr. Sitz's first visit to Saskatchewan. And I know it won't be his last, as the Deputy Premier has said.

Of course Mr. Sitz has completed his foreign services training in 1980 and has had a wonderful experience, I think, in six or seven different countries around the world. And while, as I say, this is the first visit, he has promised to be coming back many, many times, and maybe even working with us and the Saskatchewan Liquor Board to get more German wines on the shelves in our Liquor Board stores.

And on behalf of the official opposition, I just wanted to join with the Deputy Premier in welcoming our special guests here today, and also to say how proud we are of the relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany and Canada, and of course the province of Saskatchewan. And it's my understanding that Saskatchewan has the largest proportion of German ethnic people of any province in Canada, and we're very proud of that. So thank you for being here today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to you and through you, I'd like to introduce approximately 100 grade 5 to 9 students from Monseigneur de Laval School and their teachers, as well as a group of 30 students from St. Pius X School and their teachers. As well we have a number of representatives from L'Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise, and these guests join us today as part of the celebration of les

Rendez-vous de la Francophonie 2011.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming this awesome group to their Assembly.

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

Mr. McCall: — Merci, Monsieur le président. Au nom l'opposition officielle, je voudrais également souhaiter la chaleureuse bienvenue à tous les membres de la communauté francophone qui sont présents à l'assemblée aujourd'hui.

Les Fransaskois et les francophones a travers le pays rassemblent ce mois pour les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. Le thème cette année des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie est «Interagir pour s'enrichir» qui souligne que la communication et l'ouverture de l'esprit sont les bases d'une société multiculturelle.

Nous sommes très fiers de tous vos efforts formidables pour faire avancer la communauté francophone en Saskatchewan et a travers le pays. Votre communauté est un véritable exemple de la devise de notre province, *Multis e gentibus vires*, qui signifie «Nos origines multiples, notre force.» Merci, Monsieur le président.

[Translation: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I would also like to extend a warm welcome to all the members of the francophone community who are present in the Assembly today.]

The Fransaskois and francophones across the country are coming together this month for les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. This year's theme for les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie is Interaction Leads to Understanding, which underlines that communication and a spirit of openness are the foundations of a multicultural society.

We are very proud of all your remarkable efforts to advance the francophone community in Saskatchewan and across the country. Your community is a genuine example of our province's motto, *Multis e gentibus vires*, "from many peoples, strength." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, Bruce Penner, who is up in your gallery. Give us a wave, Bruce. Bruce and his family farm in the Saltcoats area and actually was a neighbour of mine for many, many years. So we all welcome him to his legislature, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Morin: — [The hon. member spoke for a time in German.]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature, 23 grade 5 and 6 who are sitting in the east gallery. They come from St. Pius X Elementary School. They're accompanied by their teacher, Elizabeth Stevenson, and parents, Sarah Cooke, Blanche Bellerive, and Scott Degelman. I ask all members to welcome them here to the legislature.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, a group of people who've come to the legislature today to raise their concerns about the state of housing in Saskatchewan. Now some are sitting in the east gallery and some are in the Speaker's gallery.

But the group first I would like to introduce are the social work students from the University of Regina who've taken on this issue and really have found deep meaning in their work and their studies about this issue about housing, and have done a great job by facilitating this today.

I'd like to introduce Serena Cataldo. She is the president of the U of R [University of Regina] social workers association. Serena. Alyssa Kaczmar, Andrea Goud, Irene Russon, Christina Cornwell, Holly Warkentin, Lisa Chapman, and Paul Thunberg. And they've called their project All Peoples' Housing. It was just great to see them out today.

Several groups actually came out in support of their work this morning. Terri Sleeva, on the floor of the legislature, is no stranger to many of us. She's a very strong activist with the Queen City tenants association. Shirley Dixon is up in the gallery here from CUPW [Canadian Union of Postal Workers].

Here today as well, a couple of faculty members from the University of Regina, Dr. Marc Spooner and Dr. Garson Hunter. And Dr. Spooner, of course, is entering the political world as candidate for Regina Wascana. We have Chad Blenkin from Yorkton, and as well Dan Lindsay and Stella and Donna — many people who've come out today to show their support for this important issue. I ask all members to show a warm welcome to these folks to their legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Greystone, the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, we'd like to join the member opposite in welcoming all of the individuals and groups that he's just referenced, most especially the faculty members and students from the University of Regina. We know how vital students are and faculty members are within the province of Saskatchewan, and we appreciate their ideas and their energy, especially as it pertains to social justice issues. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to help us welcome these individuals to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want

to join my colleague in welcoming the consul general of Germany to what we typically refer to, in the Aboriginal culture, as a Treaty 4 territory. And I also want to welcome our guests from the French community as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, in my own language of Cree I want to say:

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

And I just mentioned in my Cree language that I'm pleased he's here today as well as our French guests, and to say that there's a lot of room in Saskatchewan. And I'll tell all my people there'll be a special visit to our territory, Treaty 4 territory. And certainly welcome you and your guests as well. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, seated in your gallery, I'm honoured to introduce Ms. Donna From who has served the fine constituents of Regina Rosemont for the past three years as constituency assistant, and continues to do so. Also joining Ms. Donna From today is Mr. David Wood, who serves our constituents in a casual capacity, Mr. Speaker.

And what I'd like to say about these two individuals and our entire office staff is that they serve our constituents with care and compassion and efficient advocacy. And they're here today to observe the proceedings. Some of the discussion may be around affordability here today and around rent, cost of housing. And certainly they know first-hand the challenge of displacement of so many young families and seniors across our constituency, Mr. Speaker.

So it's my pleasure . . . I ask all members to join with me in welcoming these two very important members to their Assembly here today, Mr. Speaker.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, seated in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Mr. Chad Blenkin and his wife, Ms. Mary-Anne Blenkin, and their son, four-year-old Miguel. And if you can give us a wave there, Miguel. They're also joined by Chad's mother here today, Ms. Laverne Blenkin. And for those of you that may not know Chad, Chad is the candidate for the New Democrats in Yorkton. He and his family certainly commit their time to work within the community from a social perspective, also from a perspective of business leadership, and certainly involve themselves in their church, Mr. Speaker.

They've joined us here today. They joined us to represent Yorkton as it relates to the rally that went on here today, as it relates to the cost of housing — certainly a pressure felt by many families, as Chad relates, in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker. So it's my pleasure to welcome Chad and his family. I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in welcoming them to their Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And while still on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to also welcome, seated in your gallery, an individual that I've only met once but certainly left an impression on me, who's already

been introduced here today. And I had the pleasure of being at the historic sunset ceremony in my constituency of Regina Rosemont at the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] depot this summer, and had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Bruce Penner, who was there with his wife, Mr. Speaker, who's a fine agricultural producer in our province. I enjoyed our exchange here that day. It's a pleasure to see him in this Assembly. He runs a livestock services program in Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker, and I noticed the Minister of Agriculture introduced him here today. And certainly I suspect that that individual would be wise counsel for the Minister of Agriculture as he deliberates the matters of the day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members to join with me in welcoming Mr. Bruce Penner.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, through you, and to all members of the Assembly, four young men that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. And perhaps they could just stand or give a wave or something. They're seated in the back row there.

We have with us today Nathan Markwart, Don Keil, Drew Lubiniecki, and Trevor Holloway. These young men attended the rally for rent control this morning and are also part of a curling team. And their claim to fame is that they curled beside the Amber Holland team at the Callie Curling Club. Not with them, Mr. Speaker, but curled beside them, Mr. Speaker.

Now Don Keil is a resident of Regina Lakeview and works at the inland port outside Regina, and he plays the position of third on the team. Drew Lubiniecki is a student at the University of Regina studying geology. And, Mr. Speaker, he'll be writing a final exam this afternoon, and we wish him luck. And he plays second on the team. Trevor Holloway is a constituent of Regina Walsh Acres and is presently completing his master's degree at the University of Regina, and is the skip of the soon-to-be-famous curling team, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd like everyone to welcome these four young men to the Assembly and . . . Oh, and I would be remiss if I didn't say, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman accompanying them, by the name of Nathan Markwart, is my very able, capable, and dedicated assistant to not just myself but to the New Democratic Party itself. Mr. Nathan Markwart. And I do appreciate all the work that he does for us.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome them to the Assembly today.

[13:45]

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present petitions in support of affordable rents and housing for Regina. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that Regina is

no longer an affordable place to live. And apartment vacancy rates have been less than 1 per cent for many years, housing prices have vastly been increasing, and during the past four years, Regina rents have increased by some 40 per cent.

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

We, in the section that reads as follows, request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action. We ask the Government of Saskatchewan to create an affordable housing program that will result in a larger number of decent and affordable rental units to be made available for the residents of Regina and the rest of Saskatchewan. We need the government to implement a process of rent control to better protect tenants and provide them with the rights and security.

Mr. Speaker, I present these on behalf of some 600 residents of southern Saskatchewan. I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Before I recognize our next presenter, I'd just like to remind our guests that you're more than welcome to come to the Assembly, but we also ask that the guests not participate in any form in the debate on the floor.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to again present a petition on behalf of seniors in the province who wish to bring to our attention that the Saskatchewan Seniors Association, who have approximately 180 senior centres throughout the province, the vast majority of them in rural Saskatchewan, that these centres that provide so much needed recreation and social activities as well as important health programs and workshops and contribute to the enhanced quality of life for many of the seniors who use them, are being threatened with high rising costs of utilities, insurance, taxes, garbage disposal, etc., and they fear that over one-quarter of them may close. The closure of these centres will lead to deteriorating mental and physical health of seniors and will lead to additional stress on long-term care facilities and hospitals:

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

And these signatures are from over 40 people from Shell Lake, Springside, and Medstead. I so present.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition signed by constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place who live in Hampton Village, concerning the need for a new elementary school.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that Hampton Village is a rapidly growing community in Saskatoon with many young families; that

Hampton Village residents pay a significant amount of taxes, including education property taxes; that children in Hampton Village deserve to be able to attend school in their own community instead of travelling to neighbouring communities to attend schools that are typically already reaching capacity.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are residents of Hampton Village. I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan, including members and supporters of Amnesty International, who are concerned about the effect that Bill 160 will have on the development of human rights law in the province of Saskatchewan. 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 Saskatoon, Regina, Swift Current, Yorkton, and Kindersley, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to 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 specifically to the two consecutive deficit budgets, the two years of debt growth, Mr. Speaker, all at a time with unprecedented highs in revenues, Mr. Speaker, this year coming at a consequence of loading our debt by \$400 million, Mr. Speaker, and projected to grow by \$4.2 billion over the next four years, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Arcola, Carlyle, and Redvers. I so submit. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Affordable Housing

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think we've all seen today from the crowd of people who've gathered here at the seat of their provincial government their frustration at the lack of initiative coming from this government when it comes to addressing surging rents and lack of affordable housing. Their concerns, like so many others in Saskatchewan, are about housing, housing at every level. Housing for the homeless, intelligent rent controls, assistance for new families trying to own a home — these are their worries. And democracy is in action here today with people motivated to action, asking their government to do something, anything, to help address this crisis.

There is a link that runs through the issues like housing, rental costs, cost of living increases, frozen minimum wages, and the working poor. We know, for example, four years ago Sask Housing did not have waiting lists, and now the list has doubled to over 2,300 in the last two years. We need a provincial housing strategy that focuses on people, all people in all corners of Saskatchewan, and the right to safe, quality housing, a place they can call home.

We call on the government to act now, not at the eleventh hour in June. Mr. Speaker, we have to keep in mind that democracy exists and is showing itself on our doorstep today while we work, and remember that answering the needs of the people, it's our primary task.

Mr. Speaker, rent is out of control, and we must bring it back into control. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

2011 Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the proclamation of March 4th until March the 20th as les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie 2011 in Saskatchewan. For the last week and for the next five days, Saskatchewan's francophones and French speakers are joining those from across the country to celebrate francophone culture and heritage right here in our province.

For more than 100 years, we have benefited from the presence of French culture and language in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be from a province that has a vibrant and active francophone community that contributes to the growth and vitality of our province, to the benefit of everyone who calls Saskatchewan home.

With the belief that greater interaction leads to greater understanding, all Saskatchewan residents are invited to attend the numerous activities taking place across this province.

Festivities are held annually in March throughout Canada to promote French language and francophone culture to coincide with the International Day of La Francophonie on March 20th. I would encourage everyone, no matter their heritage, to take part in this cultural celebration.

I am pleased to be able to rise today to highlight the importance of the francophone community to our province of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Achievements of Saskatchewan's Curling Teams

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the extraordinary achievements of this province's junior men's and women's curling teams.

Although our junior men's team missed the podium, they did a fantastic job representing their country under very difficult circumstances. Team Moskowy advanced to the bronze medal game, finishing a very respectable fourth. Team Moskowy includes skip Braeden Moskowy, third Kirk Muires, second Colton Flasch, lead Matt Lang, and coach Dwayne Mihalicz.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian junior women's team hails from the Nutana Curling Club in my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview, and we're so very proud of the team. The team consisted of skip Trish Paulsen, teammates Kari Kennedy, Kari Paulsen, Natalie Yanko, and Dailene Sivertson and coach Bob Miller. The team's hard work and great play paid off with a berth to the championship final against Scotland's Eve Muirhead, who eventually won their fourth consecutive championship. In the end, the Paulsen rink comes home with the silver medal and the team made all curling fans in Saskatchewan proud.

Mr. Speaker, although these two exemplary teams didn't bring home gold, they are winners in the eyes of this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan. These teams can look to the example of Team Holland, or should I say Team Canada, and look forward to all the opportunities in their future curling careers. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Team Paulsen is already looking ahead. In today's *StarPhoenix*, when asked about the experience of playing in a championship, Trish Paulsen said, "The experience was well worth it and a valuable one for future events on the world stage."

I call on all members today to join me in honouring these amazing young Saskatchewan athletes.

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

Fundraising for New Curling Rink

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to tell this Assembly that the true community spirit is alive and well in the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats.

In 2009, the village of Grayson's curling rink could no longer

be used due to structural damage. A committee made up of members from the area was formed called Grayson Grows. It was decided that a new three-sheet curling rink needed to be built as it serves many functions in the community.

To date over \$200,000 has been raised through a variety of efforts, including personal and corporate donations, a lottery, and by doing what this community knows best — farming. They grew a canola crop last year with donated land, seed, chemical, and equipment. Their efforts raised \$66,000.

The Grayson Grows committee even entered their project in the Pepsi Refresh online contest in the building neighbourhoods category for a chance at a \$100,000 grant. They are currently in 12th place and online voting closes April 30th. I encourage everyone to go to the Pepsi Refresh web page and vote for the Grayson Curling Club project.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to give special mention to Laura Nelson, chairperson, and Mayor Neil Ottenbreit, Vice-Chair of the Grayson Grows committee, for their time and leadership on this project. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend Grayson for coming together in the true Saskatchewan style and for moving forward with their curling rink project. Thank you.

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

Consumer Rights

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is World Consumer Rights Day. First held in 1983, it's become an annual reminder of the need to protect the basic rights of all consumers. One of those most basic rights, Mr. Speaker, is the right to be able to expect accuracy in advertising. That's a protection the Sask Party government has not extended to Saskatchewan people.

To make life more affordable, they promised gas tax relief to give consumers a break at the pumps when the price of oil gets too high, Mr. Speaker, but then they broke that promise. And the Sask Party hasn't protected consumers from rising utility rates either since abolishing the NDP's [New Democratic Party] lowest cost utility bundle. Under this government, SaskPower increased its rates by 8.5 per cent in 2009, and in August 2010, SaskPower bills went up by another 7.5 per cent to 8.5 per cent. In less than 20 months, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan consumers were paying almost 20 per cent more for their power.

And there's been no protection for renters either. Rents are rising across the province along with the price of gas, utilities, food, and other necessities, so families find it harder and harder to afford basic shelter, and the food bank use is growing. And yet, Mr. Speaker, the government refuses to offer these families any protection from the unregulated market by considering an intelligent next generation of rent controls.

After all these failures to protect the rights of Saskatchewan citizens as consumers, Mr. Speaker, I expect these same citizens to soon exercise their rights as voters and exchange a faulty government for an improved model.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Opposition Critic's Statement

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the member from Prince Albert Northcote spent considerable time failing to make the case for the NDP's job-killing resource tax.

He began his diatribe with the blunt statement, "Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker." He then went on to declare, and I quote, that "We do not use potash in our agricultural sector in any way, shape, or form."

Now, Mr. Speaker, that critic for Energy, Resources, and Forestry ought to know better. In fact before he makes such a blanket statement about something that he knows so very little about, he should do some research. Had he been better prepared for last week's 75-minute debate, he might've avoided such a foolish statement. He might have known that Saskatchewan uses 64 000 tonnes of its own potash every year.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain the member from Prince Albert Northcote did not misspeak here. Stating that Saskatchewan farmers do not use potash must win the award for the most erroneous statement ever uttered in this House, or at least, or at least it's up there with their leader stating that "We'd mine potash in Kamsack." Not only is it reflective of an NDP critic who does not have the skills to understand the resource sector in this province, it demonstrates a leader who cannot manage a team. Mr. Speaker, the only thing in need of review here are those members.

[14:00]

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

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, occupational health and safety is important to all Saskatchewan residents. Mr. Speaker, March 13 to 19 is Agricultural Safety Week in Saskatchewan. This week is a time to make note of the hazards that exist on farms across this great province and to find ways to make farming safer. This year's theme is: Manage the risk. Control the hazard.

Across Canada an average of 115 people are killed and at least 1,500 are hospitalized for farm-related incidents, according to the Canadian agricultural injury reporting program, CAIR.

According to CAIR, the two leading causes of death on Canadian farms are machinery and livestock. Looking at machinery-related deaths, tractors are by far the most dangerous, while handling bulls, horses, and cows with calves causes the most deaths in non-machinery incidents.

Farming is the fourth most hazardous industry in Canada. As a crucial part of our growing economy and a vital human resource, we need to be aware of the dangers facing our farmers and support safety initiatives for them. Prevention and problem solving bring benefits not only of better knowledge, skills, and attitudes, but also better quality productivity and cost control without losses due to injury or illness.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture has been an important part of my life,

as it has many of my colleagues who have family involved in agriculture. I urge all members to take this week's message of farm safety back to the constituencies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Rent Control

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say that today we had a number of families come to the Legislative Building to ask the government to give the protection that they need to avoid the rapidly increasing rate of rental rates in the province of Saskatchewan. We know that in the past four years rents have increased by about 40 per cent, and many families are struggling indeed to make ends meet and having to make very tough choices. These families are asking the government, the Sask Party government to move quickly to implement rent control. We have thousands of names on petitions, people from across the province asking for the same thing.

My question to the minister is, having heard from the people of Saskatchewan in many forms about the need of protection for renters in this province, are we now in a position to hear from the government an announcement that next-generation rent control will be put in place by this government?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite and everybody in the province that we are very concerned about the vulnerability of people that don't have a home, that don't have shelter. The members opposite are asking us to bring forward or gamble on a policy that really doesn't have a lot of credit at all.

We know that the article in *The StarPhoenix* actually had 93 per cent of professional economists agree on one thing: they agreed that a ceiling on rents reduces the quantity and the quality of housing that's available. So there are two issues that we know do work, Mr. Speaker, that can't be criticized. One of them is putting more money in the pockets of people and the other one is more housing.

So we have, Mr. Speaker, we've done exactly that. We've taken 92,000 people off the tax rolls. We've indexed rent supplements and shelter rates, and we've doubled low-income tax credits. And, Mr. Speaker, we've also built more affordable housing.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that the government is ready to do something about the people who live in poverty, or the working poor, because this government has frozen the salary of the poorest of the poor, the minimum wage earners. And I'm glad to hear her say they're going to do something about that.

But my question to the minister follows the lines that in Canada about 80 per cent of the families have protection of rent control from the governments of their province or their jurisdiction. In

fact in *Winnipeg Free Press* in January 12th, the headline is “Good news for renters. More units built last year than any other [year] since the . . . ’80s.” It goes on to say, “Local renters finally get a dose of good news Tuesday . . .” because they are seeing more rental units built than any year in the past 30 years.

My question to the minister is this: at a time when rent control is in place in Manitoba and the rent cap was 1 per cent in 2010, and they got a record number of units built in Winnipeg alone, 807 units under construction, how can you say that rent controls don’t work to build out and have more rental units and at the same time protect Saskatchewan families?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I think there are some numbers that the members opposite probably do know but prefer not to think about. We actually had the number of rental starts tripled in 2009 to 2010. We had 525 rental starts in our province last year. I think the member opposite should know that housing starts were up 115 per cent in February over February and that multiple units increased by 231 per cent year over year.

But, Mr. Speaker, with this . . . [inaudible] . . . with the stat that the member opposite talked about when it comes to Manitoba, Manitoba’s vacancy rates are headed in the wrong direction. You know what’s happened in Manitoba last year? Provincially their vacancy rate went from 1.1 per cent to point nine per cent, and in Winnipeg it went from 1.1 to point eight per cent.

Any progress that was made in Manitoba exists where there is loopholes in the rental laws.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the renters in this province, the thousands of renters in many constituencies in our province, 50 per cent of the families rent. In Douglas Park, I think it’s around 50 per cent. In Moose Jaw south, it’s about 40. But these thousands of families who are facing a 10 per cent increase per year or 40 per cent over the last four years will be pleased to know that there’s no problem, thanks to the minister.

The fact is there is a huge problem. And as I travel the province, whether it’s in Estevan or La Ronge or Kindersley or Yorkton, families are telling me they want protection from their government by way of rent control.

My question to the minister is this: I know you’ve got a housing conference planned, but in year four of the mandate of a government, if all we can have is no protection but another conference, isn’t this a bit weak? And won’t people have to choose a different government in order to get rent control that they want and need?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, before the last election the members opposite, I know, were considering rent control. They actually talked about it in the paper, and they did not do it, Mr.

Speaker. They cancelled rent control in 1992. They had 16 years to reinstate rent control; they didn’t do it. All you have to do is read the paper from 2007 and you’ll know that the NDP did not take the opportunity because they know it didn’t work. But you know what does work, Mr. Speaker, is to make . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we know what does work is to make sure that there’s more money in people’s pockets and that we build more units. Right now our vacancy rate went from 1.9 per cent to 2.5 per cent. We know that that’s an increase. Mr. Speaker. There’s more work to be done, and that’s why we’re having the housing conference. We can’t just do it with government alone; we must work with partners. And I’m very pleased that we have an opportunity to have the summit and a housing strategy that we’ll be announcing in June.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the families in Saskatchewan who earn minimum wage know that their wage has been frozen for over two years — no increase at all. Health care workers, increase of 1 per cent. People who are renting in this province, that’s not the only massive increase that we have. Whether it comes to gasoline or food or the rising cost of power rates in this province, families, working people in this province are having a difficult time making ends meet.

My question to the minister is this: at a time when people are demanding protection by way of rent control, can we now have this government at least consider and look at the option of having next-generation rent control in this province?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know that we have a stand on rent control, that what we’re doing is making sure that people have more money in their pocket and that we’re building more units.

Well I would like to correct the statement that the member opposite made when he talked about minimum wage. We have increased the minimum wage three times since January 2008. This now is 9.25 an hour.

Mr. Speaker we have also addressed things like lower utility costs. Seven per cent decrease in the average residential customer’s energy bill, that’s the third decrease in two years. We’ve doubled the low income tax credit. We’ve nearly doubled the number of seniors eligible for benefits under the seniors’ income plan, and we’ve nearly doubled the amount of money that they get from \$90 to \$190 for single seniors. Mr. Speaker, we’ve indexed the rental supplements and the shelter rates five times and indexed them to the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, we know there’s more work to be done, and that’s why we’re working as a government to make sure that there’s not only jobs but that there’s opportunities for people in this province. And we look forward to it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Sexual Abuse Victims

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Last year the Saskatchewan Party government cut the domestic abuse outreach program. Now we learn that Tamara's House, a community-based organization that dedicated itself to helping women who are victims of childhood sexual abuse, will be closing its doors at the end of April.

The StarPhoenix on March 12, 2011 quoted Tamara's House board member Cheryl Carver saying, "We have lost significant funding over the last year and a half," citing government programs having dried up.

To the minister: what is the government's plan to support the victims of sexual abuse who will no longer be receiving the support of Tamara's House?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well firstly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the employees and volunteers of Tamara's House for their commitment and work over the years.

We, as a province, had continued with \$350,000 in funding this year, which has been an increase over the last two years. We understand that there had been some federal funding that had been lost and because of that the board made the decision to discontinue operations of Tamara's House.

As a government, we're going to work with other organizations to ensure that the services provided by Tamara's House continue through other organizations. And again we just want to thank the Tamara's House for the good work that they've done over the years.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, there's a disturbing pattern that has developed with the Saskatchewan Party government and the lack of caring for vulnerable people. They cut the funding to Station 20, the Quint Development program, the welfare rights office, the South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre, the domestic abuse outreach. And now Tamara's House is closing its doors.

In a CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Saskatoon interview, United Way executive director Sheri Benson said that the Tamara House closure is a major loss to the community, and I quote, "They're part and have been a part of a social safety net people have counted on."

To the minister: what's the government's plan to restore this much-needed safety net?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well as I indicated in my first response, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government continued with the level of funding from past years, actually increasing the level of funding from past years. We understand that the funding lost referenced in the article the member refers to was federal funding, Mr. Speaker. Because of that, we understand the board made the decision to discontinue operation of Tamara's House.

We wish to thank the staff and the volunteers that worked at Tamara's House for their good work, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to work with organizations in Saskatoon to ensure that the services provided are continued.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, with respect, the question wasn't what has the government done that is evidently failing. It is what the government might do, and when, that might possibly succeed.

Mr. Speaker, Tamara's House has been operating for 20 years, helping women cope with the sexual abuse they went through as children. The trauma of the abuse stays with them and affects every aspect of their lives. When Tamara's House closes April 30th — and there's no comfort from this government that it will not — women suffering from the effects of childhood sexual abuse lose an important resource whose sole focus was to help them heal.

To the minister: it is the government's responsibility to help and protect these women. When Tamara's House closes, where are they supposed to go for healing and help? What is the government's plan to help these vulnerable women and when does this help come, if indeed it is on its way?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's going to continue to work with other organizations in Saskatoon to ensure that there's a seamless service transition to make sure that the services provided by Tamara's House are continued.

As I indicated, the province made no reduction in funding to Tamara's House. In fact the funding has been increased from the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Tamara's House, I would point out as well, never requested additional funding from the province of Saskatchewan.

We understand that the funding lost that was referenced was federal funding. We thank the employees and volunteers of Tamara's House for their very good work over the years, and we're going to continue to make sure that services provided continue to be provided.

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

[14:15]

Environmental Monitoring

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, a report was tabled last week in Alberta that looked into water quality monitoring in the oil sands area. The report, which evaluated previous studies, determined there are deficiencies in current monitoring programs. It's clear that there's not enough monitoring of dangerous chemicals getting into water systems, many of which would flow into Saskatchewan. At the same time, the Sask Party government has cut monitoring programs.

With these latest findings in mind, what is this minister going to do to ensure there's proper monitoring of the water from the oil sands area that is flowing into this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in government, they did very little for monitoring for acid rain in northern Saskatchewan. Our government has been aggressively monitoring for acid rain. We've also been working with the Alberta government to determine how the Alberta oil sands are impacting Saskatchewan.

Any development there in the North, Mr. Speaker, any permits given out on this side, were done by the members opposite but they had no plan on how it should be developed. Mr. Speaker, our government has spent \$2 million on a northwest sustainable development plan.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite also have an oil executive as their leader. And so, Mr. Speaker, I'd be interested to hear the next question because I would like to hear what the members opposite would do in this situation, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Morin: — Apparently, Mr. Speaker, the minister is not familiar with the report that came down just as recently as last week, and we'll be glad to share it with him if he has not yet seen it. The latest study makes it clear contaminants have gotten into the water systems in the oil sands area and are flowing into Saskatchewan's waterways. Because of that, many of these contaminants are now in Saskatchewan's ecosystem. Since Saskatchewan has been left with the effects of water contamination from another province, why isn't this minister trying to determine compensation for the impact of this contamination and protecting Saskatchewan people from further damage to our environment?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, our government . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I'd ask the individual standing in the gallery to please be seated. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our government's been aggressively monitoring for acid rain in northern Saskatchewan. We've been working with Alberta to determine how their oil sands have been impacting our province.

Mr. Speaker, I mention that they're led by a member who used to be an oil executive. And I'm curious to . . . I find it curious, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple quotes from him. Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting this. The Leader of the Opposition said in 2009:

Brad Wall fails to understand that consumers in the United States and elsewhere will not want to buy oil that's produced in a way which harms the environment. Saskatchewan should prohibit the mining of its oil sands.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, in 2008 he said, and I quote, "If you don't like oil sands oil, what companies will do is build a bigger pipeline to the West Coast and export it to China and India." Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to know where the members opposite actually stand on the oil sands front.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear the member has absolutely no idea of the questions that are being asked. We're asking about monitoring of the water that's leeching into Saskatchewan waterways, and all he can do is try and divert the question elsewhere.

Even before last week's report, the federal government promised to improve the monitoring of water quality in the oil sands area with a new plan which it's going to unveil next week. Despite the fact the federal government noted the impacts of the oil sands area has on Saskatchewan, we have heard nothing from this government on the concerns that Saskatchewan people have and what they would like to see in this new monitoring program.

What discussions has this minister had with his federal counterparts and Alberta counterparts on this new plan, or has he done nothing and left Saskatchewan vulnerable to future environmental problems?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Highways and Infrastructures.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Okay. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the minister's been doing good work on this file. Mr. Speaker, we've been aggressively monitoring in the North on acid rain to see the impact, we've been working closely with the Alberta government to see what type of impact it's having in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's good to take some environment questions because the member opposite appears to not only be concerned about acid rain, but also recycling because she keeps recycling the same questions, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to stand in this House and recycle the same questions until Saskatchewan people get answers.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan . . . The Sask Party government has reduced the funding and monitoring Saskatchewan lakes, waterways, and groundwater. At the same time, Alberta has also reduced its monitoring programs. These reductions have happened even though a report that was commissioned by the federal government clearly states that more monitoring of the oil sands areas is necessary. And now this latest report shows that more monitoring of oil sands area is a must, according to the report “. . . is in the best interest of the public and the oil sands industry to make sure that all monitoring programs are conducted with scientific rigour and oversight.”

With all of this mounting evidence, why is this government more interested in protecting the rights of large corporations over the safety and security of Saskatchewan people and the environment?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's just wrong. This government will defend the interests of Saskatchewan people all the time. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned several times previously, we are aggressively monitoring for acid rain in the North. We will continue to do so. We will also work with Alberta to see what type of impact that will have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Chiropractic Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One year ago, the Sask Party cut funding to chiropractic services after they had negotiated a deal with the Chiropractors' Association. And the ministry even said, I quote, “I am pleased that we've reached a deal with the Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan.”

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party then tore that deal up, saying that they had to save \$10 million. Mr. Speaker, the third-quarter financial numbers are now in, and they show that the government will have \$1 billion more than it thought it would have.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is he going to use some of that found money to reinsure chiropractic care in Saskatchewan so that people can afford to get the care they need, where and when they need it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, a year ago we, this government, came to the difficult decision. It was a very difficult decision to no longer subsidize chiropractic services in the province. What we ended up doing is falling in line with every other province in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, but what we did do is continue to subsidize for low income up to 12 visits per year, better coverage than what many provinces have

followed through on, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting when the party opposite, when the NDP went through their policy review, what we have seen on health care so far is reinsuring chiropractic services and vitamin D. And vitamin D, that's their cure to fix the ails of the health care system, continue to subsidize chiropractic services and vitamin D. A long ways from what, I think, most people in this province would expect from an opposition.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year when the funding was cut, the Chiropractors' Association president, Dr. Shane Taylor, predicted that it would have a direct impact on emergency rooms. Last week we heard about ER [emergency room] overcrowding at the Regina General and the Pasqua hospitals, and people lying in pain on gurneys in hallways waiting for treatment.

The minister told reporters, “There's a number of things that bring more people to our facilities right now.” Well, Mr. Speaker, one of those things is the Sask Party's short-sighted decision to cut chiropractic funding. Now seniors on fixed incomes and the working poor can't afford to go to the chiropractor and instead go to emergency rooms.

To the minister: is he prepared to admit that he made a mistake last year and reinstate the chiropractic insurance and take some of the stress off our emergency rooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the services that we cover are similar to what other provinces do for low income — up to 12 visits per year, Mr. Speaker.

For her to make the assertion that emergency rooms are overflowing because chiropractic services are de-insured, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely false. It's absolutely wrong. There are a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, including the flu season. We've seen emergency rooms across Canada experience surges, Mr. Speaker, as in British Columbia where they've had to put them into a Tim Hortons, Mr. Speaker. We have not gone to anywhere close to that levels, Mr. Speaker. We are experiencing pressures, but it certainly isn't for the fact that we're no longer insuring chiropractic services.

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

Ms. Junor: — Don't bother looking at any of the real causes, just make up something on the fly. And if you like what other provinces are doing, you should put in rent control then.

Mr. Speaker, the working poor and seniors on fixed incomes can't afford to pay for private coverage. And for these people it's an affordability issue. People are forced to live with chronic pain or go to overcrowded emergency rooms and wait hours to get help. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's choice to cut chiropractic funding is costing the health care system and the

people of Saskatchewan that need it the most. It's costing them more.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how can he stand in his spot and say that he's doing his job when he can see that the direct, negative results of his short-sighted decisions are costing Saskatchewan people more? Now will the minister admit he made a mistake, put the money back in? Yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anybody else in this Assembly finds the questioning a little bit strange. Yesterday she stood in the House and complained about private delivery within the health care system. Today she's standing in the House asking for private delivery within the health care system.

I don't quite understand it, Mr. Speaker. But I do understand in opposition, they've got the longest serving member over there who is a critic now of privatization, hasn't got up and asked a question. I find it amazing: after 26 years she's relegated to sweet tweet.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Rick Hansen Institute Initiative

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce today that our government has committed more than \$4.3 million for a comprehensive five-year Saskatchewan-based initiative in partnership with the Rick Hansen Institute. Our government is extremely proud to be the second in Canada to commit to a Rick Hansen Institute initiative, joining Mr. Hansen's home province of British Columbia to help commemorate the 25th anniversary of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour.

Saskatchewan's Rick Hansen Institute initiative is supported by several provincial ministries and agencies and consists of the following five-year commitments: \$1 million from the Ministry of Health for spinal cord injury related research, \$500,000 from the Ministry of Social Services, and new funding for the Canadian Paraplegic Association of Saskatchewan, and \$500,000 from the Office of the Provincial Secretary to fund the Clayton Gerein Legacy Fund, and more than \$2.3 million first announced in December from Saskatchewan Sport and Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport to help fund disability sports organizations, high-performance athletes with disabilities, and accessible playgrounds.

Saskatchewan's five-year, \$4.3 million commitment to the Rick Hansen Institute initiative comes at a time when people across Canada are celebrating the 25th anniversary of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour. The Man in Motion World Tour caused a profound shift in the collective consciousness towards the belief in the potential of people with disabilities and initially

raised \$26 million for spinal cord research, for rehabilitation, and for sport. The positive effects of the Man in Motion tour are still having an impact today, and it can be seen in all the good work being done nationally and around the world by the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Rick Hansen Institute.

Thanks to the new partnership, we are thrilled to be announcing today the impact of the Rick Hansen Foundation, and Institute, within Saskatchewan will be that much greater. By building a strong provincial foundation of spinal cord injury research, clinical care, and rehabilitation best practices, we hope to achieve the best possible outcomes for Saskatchewan people with spinal cord injuries. The collaboration and research that will take place over the next five years in our province will enable innovations in spinal cord injury care and research right across Canada.

[14:30]

Clayton Gerein, who passed away in January of 2010, represented Saskatchewan for nearly 30 years on the provincial, the national, and the international stage. He represented Canada in seven Paralympic Games, from 1984 to 2008, and was Saskatchewan's greatest athlete ever. Clayton was named Saskatchewan's male athlete of the year three times in three separate decades. The Clayton Gerein Legacy Fund, developed in partnership with the Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association and the Provincial Secretary, will introduce and support the involvement of people with physical disabilities in wheelchair sports and other recreational opportunities, providing and improving their quality of life.

In addition today's announcement includes enhanced support for high-level athletes and improved access for disability sports programs for Saskatchewan athletes with a disability.

Meanwhile enhanced funding to the Canadian Paraplegic Association of Saskatchewan, provided through the Ministry of Social Services, will go towards peer support, rehabilitation counselling, and outreach services to address the gap in supporting Aboriginal people with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities.

The CPA's [Canadian Paraplegic Association] peer support program provides opportunities for newly injured individuals to learn, and meet, from other people who are currently active in their community and have successfully confronted issues related to living with a physical disability.

Special thank you to Rick Hansen and the representatives of the Rick Hansen Institute for joining us here in Regina for today's announcement. Thank you.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for sending over an advance copy of her statement. And we think it is a very good announcement. We look forward to seeing the progress over the next five years. And we think this is, of course, a very timely announcement because when people have a spinal cord injury, it's one that we hope that we cannot see into the future. But while people are

paraplegics, that they can participate fully in our society in an inclusive way right from performing to an excellence standard in the Paralympics as Clayton Gerein did, right to being able to play on the playground and children who have disabilities can play and participate along with children who do not. And we think this is very important.

It's also timely as we think about what has happened in the NHL [National Hockey League] just a couple of weeks ago with that injury, and what can we do to prevent that and how can we help people recover from injuries like that? And maybe we need to discuss more about our sports in the world and some that . . . high-impact sports. What can we do to make sure that kind of thing doesn't happen into the future? So I think this is very timely because we keep thinking about this. And we look forward to seeing the results over the five years and hopefully that can continue into the future.

Rick Hansen led quite a legacy, I think it was in the '80s, the Man in Motion Tour. We all looked and admired his leadership then, and here he is still doing this, and it's a wonderful thing. And so we look forward to the outcomes and we are very happy to see . . . Well we were saddened to see Clayton Gerein pass away in January 2010. Many of us knew Clayton, had seen him receive his awards, watched him participate in his high level of sports, and wished him the very best. We were all saddened when he passed away. And so his legacy here lives on and we think that's a very, very important thing.

So with that, we look forward as I said to the next five years and hopefully many, many more years as we support all people in Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I'm prepared to make a statement on a point of order raised by the Government House Leader. The point of order relates to the comments made by the member from Athabasca during debate on Bill No. 144 on Wednesday, March 9th, 2011. The Government House Leader asserts that the member for Athabasca made profane remarks across the floor to another member. In response, the Opposition House Leader argued that the matter should have been raised at the time and not two sitting days later.

I'd like to remind members it is the practice of this Assembly in raising a point of order that it must be brought at the earliest possible time. Beauchesne's, 6th Edition, at paragraph 321 states, and I quote, "A point of order against procedure must be raised promptly."

The remarks in question are not published in *Hansard* but are clearly audible on the video record. The Government House Leader contends that it was not possible to review the video proceedings until after the House adjourned on Thursday afternoon. I have confirmed that there was a network connectivity problem that delayed the posting of the video record until after 1 p.m. on March 10th.

I agree with the Opposition House Leader that points of order should be raised promptly and at the first opportunity. Most

often, points of order are raised in the course of debate, but it is not uncommon for matters to be raised the next sitting day after a review of the record. In this case, I have confirmed that the opportunity to raise the issue in the Assembly after a review of the video record was yesterday's sitting.

I remind members that they are able to ask the Chair to review the record for comments that they believe to be out of order. Members do not need to wait for the publication of proceedings before raising a point of order.

Aside from the timing of the point of order, I do find that the remarks made across the floor were unparliamentary. I have reviewed *Hansard* and found the Deputy Speaker did intervene when the remarks were made. I would like to direct members to page 6604 of *Hansard* where the Deputy Speaker asked the member to watch his language and not to talk across the floor. I also noted that last evening, at the beginning of proceedings, the member for Athabasca withdrew the offensive remarks.

Given that the Deputy Speaker dealt with the matter at the time of the incident and the subsequent withdrawal of the remark, I do not believe the Speaker needs to make further comment.

I want to close by reinforcing what the Deputy Speaker said at the time of the incident and encourage members to be mindful of rule 46(2) that prohibits loud, private conversations and offensive language in this Assembly. This behaviour makes it difficult to maintain order and decorum.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 668 through 704.

The Speaker: — Questions 668 through 704 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 705.

The Speaker: — Question 705 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to 706.

The Speaker: — Question 706 answer is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 707.

The Speaker: — Question 707 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 708 and 709.

The Speaker: — Questions 708 and 709 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 710.

The Speaker: — Question 710 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 711 and 712.

The Speaker: — Questions 711 and 712 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 713.

The Speaker: — Question 713 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 714.

The Speaker: — Question 714 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answers to questions 715 and 716.

The Speaker: — Questions 715 and 716 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 717.

The Speaker: — 717 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 718.

The Speaker: — Question 718 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 719 and 720.

The Speaker: — Questions 719 and 720 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 721.

The Speaker: — Question 721 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 722 through 724.

The Speaker: — Questions 722 through 724 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 725.

The Speaker: — Question 725 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 726 and 727.

The Speaker: — Questions 726 and 727 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 728.

The Speaker: — Question 728 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 729 and 730.

The Speaker: — Questions 729 and 730 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 731.

The Speaker: — Question 731 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 732.

The Speaker: — Question 732 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 733.

The Speaker: — Question 733 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 734 and 735.

The Speaker: — Questions 734 and 735 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 736.

The Speaker: — Question 736 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 737.

The Speaker: — Question 737 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 738.

The Speaker: — Question 738 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 739 and 740.

The Speaker: — Questions 739 and 740 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 741.

The Speaker: — Question 741 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 742.

The Speaker: — Question 742 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 743.

The Speaker: — Question 743 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 744 and 745.

The Speaker: — Questions 744 and 745 are tabled. I recognize

the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 746.

The Speaker: — Question 746 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 747.

The Speaker: — Question 747 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 748.

The Speaker: — Question 748 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 749 and 750.

The Speaker: — Questions 749 and 750 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

[14:45]

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 751.

The Speaker: — Question 751 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 752.

The Speaker: — Question 752 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 753.

The Speaker: — Question 753 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 754 and 755.

The Speaker: — Questions 754 and 755 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 756.

The Speaker: — Question 756 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 757.

The Speaker: — Question 757 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 758.

The Speaker: — Question 758 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 759 and 760.

The Speaker: — Questions 759 and 760 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 761.

The Speaker: — Question 761 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 762.

The Speaker: — Question 762 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answers to question 763.

The Speaker: — Question 763 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 764 and 765.

The Speaker: — Questions 764 and 765 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 766.

The Speaker: — Question 766 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 767.

The Speaker: — Question 767 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 768.

The Speaker: — Question 768 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 769 and 770.

The Speaker: — Questions 769 and 770 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 771.

The Speaker: — Question 771 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answer to question 772.

The Speaker: — Question 772 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 773.

The Speaker: — Question 773 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Table the answers to questions 774 and 775.

The Speaker: — Question 774 and 775 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Order the answer to question 776.

The Speaker: — Question 776 is ordered. I recognize the

Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 777 through 804.

The Speaker: — Questions 777 through 804 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 161

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

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to speak to Bill No. 161, *The Election Amendment Act*. I had risen recently in the legislature to speak to Bill 160, in which I spoke at length about how this government is taking the province in the wrong direction with respect to people's fundamental human rights. And, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, Bill 161, an election amendment Act, takes again away from people's right.

Now this takes away from the most fundamental right of democracy, and that is your right to vote. Now you have to ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, if they're determined to take away the fundamental human rights of Saskatchewan residents with Bills 5 and 6, with Bill 43 in which they are seeking to limit your ability to protest and limit your freedom of speech as a Saskatchewan resident, and then they introduce Bill 160, which again limits your fundamental rights within our society, there begins to be a pattern that emerges with this government of taking away the fundamental rights of its citizens.

Now as I'd said, the right to vote is the most fundamental right that you can have in a democracy, and they're systemically taking away that right from certain individuals within our society. And it's the very people that this government continues to fail on a daily basis.

We had visitors to the legislature today demanding rent controls and increased housing opportunities in the province of Saskatchewan that again have gone unheard by this government. They're not interested in housing, in affordability of housing, or in any way introducing rent controls. Now this is a group in Saskatchewan who has been frustrated by this government.

Now who would it be that Bill 161 would seek to limit the rights of? Certainly homeless people, people without housing, which is a fundamental human need. People without that need are having another right taken away. They're having the fundamental democratic right to vote. So here's the pattern, Mr. Speaker. And it's unfortunate and it's sad, that with \$1 billion more in government coffers, that they seek to limit people's

fundamental rights, whether it's the right to their own democracy and to make decisions based on who they want to see elected, whether it's their fundamental right to protest against this government, whether it's their fundamental right to free speech, whether it's their human dignity and the way that that's negatively affected when you have no housing or a poor housing situation. These are the people that this government targets, chooses to target, when Saskatchewan has more prosperity than ever in its history. Now that is a sad commentary, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to, if I could, quote from a December 1st article in the *Leader-Post* written by Angela Hall. This is December 1st, 2010, where the minister responsible makes a few statements. And he says this, Mr. Speaker: "We're going to make sure we continue consulting with stakeholder groups to ensure that we have all the avenues covered off to be more inclusive versus exclusive." Now a stranger thing you could never say. They know full well, or they should — he's the minister responsible — that Bill 161 takes away the rights. It's by its very nature exclusive. So how could you say in the newspaper that you're seeking to make it more inclusive when the nature of the Bill is to make it more exclusive? It's an absolutely ridiculous statement, Mr. Speaker.

And so who else believes that that statement is off base, Mr. Speaker? In the same article, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] chief executive officer, Laurent Mougeot, says that his organization will want to be part of the discussion around what ID [identification] is acceptable. He says, "If the preparation to go to the polling station is such that you have to go to an extensive process, I think it might be discouraging to some people." So there you have it, Mr. Speaker. There you have it. The CEO [chief executive officer] of SUMA, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, says very clearly that if there's an extensive process, I think it might be discouraging to some people. So he believes that this government is trying to discourage certain people from voting.

Now who is it in Saskatchewan that may have difficulty either with photo ID or attaining photo ID? Certainly seniors in Saskatchewan, many of whom either have never had a licence or don't currently have a licence, those people who have been treated terribly by this government. Anybody on a fixed income in Saskatchewan these days has great difficulty, great difficulty, paying for the services that they receive in Saskatchewan.

Housing, again a huge issue for people on fixed incomes — the cost to purchase power, the cost to purchase natural gas through SaskEnergy. These costs have risen dramatically under the Saskatchewan Party government, and with housing they could institute rent controls. They could increase the housing supply in order to change the market dynamic. In terms of SaskPower, certainly they have control over what happens with the rates there; SaskEnergy, the same thing, Mr. Speaker. So these things are all directly under the control of the government.

And it is seniors on fixed incomes and other people on fixed incomes who are hit the hardest by this government. And so with this Bill, Bill 161, they seek to exclude this group from voting. That's the main goal.

Who else, Mr. Speaker, has been negatively affected by this

government and who might seek not to support them in the next election, Mr. Speaker? And who has this government targeted to keep from voting in the next election with the introduction of this Bill? Well certainly they've disenfranchised many Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan, First Nation and Métis peoples, because they failed on their duty to consult. They have absolutely failed to consult when it comes to tobacco, when it comes to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. And so, Mr. Speaker, it is clear, it is clear by the actions of the government that they are not earning the support of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. And so again, another group who may find it difficult in many instances to get photo ID, targeted to ensure that they are unable to vote in the next election.

Again, the most fundamental principle of a democracy is the ability to vote freely in an election — eroded by this government.

Now again to quote from the December 10th article, Justice minister, to quote, "Justice Minister Don Morgan said federal elections and provincial elections in BC, Ontario and Quebec already require voters to show approved ID." Didn't mention, failed to mention at that time that there's a challenge currently in British Columbia about the legislation and how it takes away the fundamental democratic rights of its citizens.

And he says this, Mr. Speaker: "Saskatchewan is not taking the step in response to any specific incident." So he's admitting in the newspaper on December 1st of 2010 that there's nothing wrong with the system. He couldn't name, in the history of our province, one incident that led to the implementation . . . or the introduction, sorry, of this legislation. With all the researchers that they've got in their offices, with the entire staff of the ministry, he couldn't find one instance that led to the introduction of this legislation, couldn't find one.

[15:00]

And so you have to ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, what is the motive? What is the motive of the government to introduce legislation that limits the ability of people to vote in their own democracy? Well I think it's clear, Mr. Speaker. I think it's clear that there are a number of groups who have been mistreated by the government, who they are targeting, targeting to keep from voting in the next election. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's a shameful act of the government that this would take place.

But what else have they done to attempt to erode the democracy of the province? What else have they done, Mr. Speaker? They have, in their own caucus, struck down the decision of a bipartisan committee of the legislature to hire a Chief Electoral Officer. So what happened? You've got Bill 161 where they're amending *The Election Act* to ensure, to ensure that disenfranchised people in Saskatchewan don't vote.

So while they do that, they on another front, after a bipartisan committee selects a Chief Electoral Officer, their caucus votes it down because they're not happy that he's going to be independent. They're not happy that the goal of a Chief Electoral Officer is to increase the number of people who are going to vote in a jurisdiction. That is the job of the Chief Electoral Officer, one of the jobs, overseeing elections certainly another. And so they choose to deny the ability of an individual

to increase the electoral voter numbers, to increase the number of people who are going to vote in an election.

Now again, Mr. Speaker, Bill 161 takes away the fundamental right, democratic right of people to vote. And it harms the electoral process. And again it's not the only case in Saskatchewan where they're taking away the rights of individuals.

Now they've taken away the rights of individuals in certain cases, but they've also taken away the ability of another political party in Saskatchewan to run in this election. They are named — the Premier, the Deputy Premier — are personally named in a lawsuit brought forward and allowed by a judge with respect to a \$3 million PC [Progressive Conservative] trust fund.

So they're attempting again to subvert the electoral process with a Chief Electoral Officer, with Bill 161, because they choose to eliminate the ability of certain people to vote. And they're holding the key to \$3 million of another political party in Saskatchewan, something that I think the people of Saskatchewan do not look fondly upon.

Now who else has been harmed by this government? Who else is targeted in terms of voting in the next election? Who else do they seek to limit the ability to vote, Mr. Speaker? Homeless people and students. Again students, on an economic scale, are some of the lowest income people in Saskatchewan because they spend a full-time, the equivalent of a full-time job attending to their studies and then also will attempt in some way to be able to afford to go to school. Many of those students at our institutions of higher learning are not from the communities in which those institutions exist. Many travel from the city of Prince Albert to Saskatoon, to Regina in order to attain their educational goals.

Now those students are forced to pay for all of the things that I'd mentioned earlier. Housing is a huge cost for out-of-town students. They're again paying for power and natural gas, all of the things that are controlled by this government again. And many of whom are disenfranchised, many of whom are frustrated with this government and are an easy target for Bill 161. Some of whom don't have a licence, don't have the ability or the finances, the resources to pay for photo ID, Mr. Speaker.

And so I would ask the government at this time if they have put forward anything with respect to who will pay for the identification? Is it the ability of anybody in Saskatchewan now to go to a motor licence issuer and get their identification for free? Does it come at no cost, Mr. Speaker? Because if there's any cost at all, whether it's paying for gas for your car to get there, whether you have to take the bus from your house to a motor licence issuer, if there's any cost related at all, that cost is equal to a penalty to vote. That cost is a cost that is directly related to exercising your democratic right to vote.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that we should be enhancing people's ability, desire to be able to vote in our democracy. And what these Saskatchewan Party members are choosing to do at this time is to limit their ability to vote. And if there's a cost related, then there's a cost to vote which is absolutely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Now for many of the people that I've mentioned, whether it's seniors or students, whether it's the homeless — many of whom have been demonstrating on the steps of the legislature today — whether it's Aboriginal people, these are again groups that the government has harmed. And this is the same group, these are the same groups of people who the government is seeking through this legislation to keep from voting in some way in the next election, Mr. Speaker. And so I certainly will not in any way support this Bill because it's fundamentally undemocratic. It takes away the fundamental democratic rights of Saskatchewan citizens, Mr. Speaker. And I know that many more of my colleagues will want to speak to this Bill. So at this time, I move to adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved adjournment of debate on Bill 161, *The Election Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 162

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

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to talk about a different election Act, this one being *The Local Government Election Act*, Bill No. 162, that following on the heels of an eloquent speech regarding the provincial electoral Act.

The issues are, in many ways, the same or similar with some nuances and some twists, Mr. Speaker. And why I say that is this issue is of course related to local government election Act, and indeed there are some amendments actually that . . . One that comes to mind that I understand was asked for by both SUMA and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and that being to extend the length of service — the term of office is a better way of putting it, not the length of service — the term of office from three years to four years to bring it in line with the provincial Act. And because it was asked for by SUMA and SARM and passed at their respective annual meetings, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is in support of that part of *The Local Government Election Act*.

But I want to tell you that there are some huge concerns with other parts of *The Election Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, just to put it into context, it started around about 2000 and late 2006 and into 2007 when the federal Conservative government changed the *Elections Act* and were making moves to bring in photo ID before people could vote. And you know, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats in Ottawa and across the province . . . or across the country, rather, were speaking out against that move. And there's a reason that in opposition . . . It wasn't simply to try and be belligerent. It was to try and stand up for the very people

that many of us represent. And that's true whether we're in opposition or in government. I'm trying to be a bit non-partisan here.

But in this case I want to quote from what some opposition members said in Ottawa in February 13th, 2007:

“We have to protect the integrity of the voting system,” said Davies. “New requirements for voter I.D. will add further barriers to voting for marginalized, low-income people, and seriously undermine the right to vote,” added Davies, whose riding includes the Downtown East Side, where hundreds of people live in homeless shelters and rooming . . . [houses].

Now that's one segment of the population, Mr. Speaker, that photo ID is very difficult for. And photo ID is only one of the problems that people who might be living either homeless . . . And homeless also means couch surfing, where you don't know from night to night or day to day or week to week whose couch you might be surfing on because your circumstances are such you may be actively looking for someplace else to live, to rent.

But as is the case in Regina, and has been for three years now, the vacancy rate is 1 per cent or less. Most of the three years has been less than 1 per cent, which is full occupancy. Less than 1 per cent vacancy simply includes rental suites and houses where the landlords are just desperate. They have to fix a place up before they can rent it again for whatever reason. You know, maybe it's been a period of time — 10, 15, 20, 25 years — since it last had any significant renovations or maybe the place got trashed or maybe there was a fire or maybe there was a flood or who knows. It could be any number of things. But less than 1 per cent vacancy is considered fully rented out and even beyond.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there's credible studies that show that the couch surfing in Regina numbers are about 3,000 people as I stand here and speak. So we have an election Act that is saying to 3,000 people that are having difficulty finding a stable place to live, 3,000 people who are either living in a shelter — and there's very limited spaces there — or are homeless, living, couch surfing . . . So for 3,000 people in Regina, voting is very, very difficult, be it in this case in a municipal election which will be coming up fairly quickly.

So there are provisions of this Act, Mr. Speaker, that we would dearly love the Sask Party government to take out of *The Election Act*. It doesn't enable voting. In fact it disenfranchises a significant sector of the Saskatchewan population. It disenfranchises.

And it seems to me that with the exception of people that provide services that enable elected MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to do our jobs — and you know, there's the Clerk and the security people and, you know, people, the Pages who are not elected — but for the 58 of us in this Assembly that are elected, we should be unanimously trying to find ways to get more people voting, to enable people to vote, to enable people to speak out, to enable them to say what's on their minds, to enable them to participate in a democracy, to enable the very best of Saskatchewan people to come forward.

[15:15]

Whether it's a provincial election or, in the case of Bill 162, a local government election, a municipal election, we need to get the very best of people. We need to encourage them. And, Mr. Speaker, we're not doing so when we are demanding photo ID. Because a photo ID . . . Also we are requiring a residence, two pieces of information that state what your residence is.

Well for the 3,000 people couch surfing, what is their residence? You know, today it might be a given. They might be able to tell you what their residence is today, but not likely by the time an election rolls around. Recognize they have to have a power bill, and people who are couch surfing tend not to have power bills. I'd be astounded if any of them have a power bill that shows for the place they're couch surfing. If they're paying the power bill, it seems to me then they're into a rental situation and probably have a better situation than simply foisting themselves on friends or relatives or whatever the situation is.

Mr. Speaker, we have an election Act being proposed that disenfranchises people, that takes a segment of our population and says to them, we do not want you to vote; we do not want you to participate in a democracy. And what a shame that is from a Sask Party government that got elected on a platform of being open and accountable.

We all remember three short years ago all the promises of being open and accountable. And yet we now are faced with a piece of legislation, a part of this legislation that says, not only do we not want to be accountable, we don't want you to be able to participate in the electoral process. In other words, only if you are very wealthy, only if you're rich can you vote in the new Saskatchewan. And that is just not right. That's fundamentally not the right way to proceed. It's fundamentally just wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we have this being proposed. The federal government made its proposal respecting photo ID in 2007. The provincial government made similar proposal in 2010. And now early in 2011 we're still dealing with this legislation. The opposition are still opposed to that part of the local government election. We're opposed for a whole number of reasons.

I've already said that the Sask Party government got elected on a platform of trying to be more open and accountable. Yesterday in a different speech, I talked about the New West Partnership and how that had never come before the legislature for a vote. And yet we were asked to pass a piece of legislation so it would bring it into line with the New West Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, these are things that are undemocratic. These are things much like the federal in-and-out scheme, where just I think it was last week, we see that there's four federal MPs [Member of Parliament] were charged under the election Act with an in-and-out scheme where the federal Conservative Party asked them for some unspent money to spend in an election. They sent the cheques to the federal Conservative Party that spent it on the election. It showed as being done at the riding level. It enabled them to keep their election expenses, on paper, under the maximum, but it clearly went against the heart of what the election Act was, Mr. Speaker. It clearly, shamefully went against what that election Act was about. As a result, there's four MPs currently been charged under the federal

election Act.

And here we are today with the provincial election Act that the member for P.A. [Prince Albert] was speaking of, on our side, and flowing from that, *An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act* that I'm speaking to now — all flowing from that federal Act to this one. And while there is parts of the Act that clearly should be updated and clearly should be brought in line with what the municipalities wanted, there are parts of this Act that are offensive.

Mr. Speaker, how could you have a photo ID with an address when you don't have an address? And we saw earlier today a delegation that came to this very legislature, held a rally out front dealing with rental in Regina, dealing with a situation where for three years now the rental rate has been, the vacancy rate has been less than 1 per cent. So what we have is a situation where by, again I say, a credible study, nearly 3,000 Regina's find themselves couch surfing. We find 267 people stayed in homeless shelters or transitional housing each night in Regina. We find that homelessness is somewhat invisible because of couch surfing, because families and friends will not let their loved ones or their friends be out in the cold at night if there's any alternative.

We will all put up our friends in the short term. No matter what is going on, we will all stand by our friends in the short term and encourage them to find some more suitable place perhaps. But certainly if a friend came after supper and said, I'm homeless, I need a couch to surf on or I need a scrap of floor to sleep on, you bet I'd put that friend up. And I think everyone would, Mr. Speaker.

We know that from October 2006 to October 2010, the average rent in Regina — I want to get this exactly right — for a one-bedroom apartment in Regina, a one-bedroom apartment increased by 43 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in that four-year period, from \$559 to \$802 a month. That's a huge increase. We also know, Mr. Speaker, that a social services recipient in that time now would need to spend 97 per cent of their monthly income on shelter and food, 97 per cent on shelter and food here in Regina if you're a single person receiving social assistance, renting a one-bedroom apartment at the average price — 97 per cent of your total income spent on shelter and food. Mr. Speaker, it just goes on and on.

And there are problems there that are growing by the month, problems with homelessness, problems with rent growing by the month. And then we have a government determined to disenfranchise those very people from being able to vote in their municipal election under Bill 162, an Act to amend the local government Act.

Mr. Speaker, I diversified a little bit again inadvertently to the homeless issue. And what I wanted really to highlight was the photo ID and the impossibility of getting photo ID that's required to vote under *The Election Act*. It's impossible to get a photo ID that gives you an accurate address when you're homeless, when you're couch surfing, when you're living in a homeless shelter because, by the very nature of a homeless shelter, it is short-term. It is a transition from here to a more stable housing situation. And when you get close to an election, that just doesn't quite work.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation under Bill 162 where a government . . . I talked about being open and accountable and how this government is not being open and accountable. I want to remind people of the Saskatchewan-Montana carbon capture matter that was announced 100 feet from here in the rotunda. Great fanfare. The Governor of Montana and the Premier of Saskatchewan and the MLA for Silver Springs was the minister responsible at the time, and they announced with huge fanfare a carbon capture, carbon sequestration project. Montana-Saskatchewan announced it, couldn't have been prouder, and yet that died in the dark of night. There's never, to my knowledge, there still hasn't been an official pronouncement from the government that that is a dead duck. It's gone.

There was supposed to be federal funding from the Harper government in Ottawa and from the federal government in Washington for the United States, but the Sask Party's cousin, Stephen Harper, doesn't seem to have come through. I assume that the federal US [United States] funding didn't come through.

But in any rate, the issue that we deal with here in Saskatchewan is the provincial government that announced like they'd . . . Well they announced it like they'd built a domed stadium, you know. With that kind of fanfare.

An Hon. Member: — The doomed dome?

Mr. Trew: — No, not the doomed stadium, the domed stadium. Now it's the doomed dome. But that was how it was announced, just with the same fanfare as the doomed dome. Interestingly the same MLA for Saskatoon Silver Springs was the MLA for the carbon sequestration fund, the Montana-Saskatchewan defunct. That one has gone the way of the dodo bird. That's done, done, done and so is the doomed dome done.

Mr. Speaker, I wish, I wish that the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs was in charge of the portion of *The Local Government Election Act* that dealt with photo ID because then we'd know that the photo ID thing was doomed and was gone, and it would enable and ensure that in Regina alone 3,000 homeless people or couch surfing people would be more likely able to vote in the municipal elections.

I have not seen the numbers for Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I have not seen them, so I want to be crystal clear: I'm not presenting myself as, in any way, an expert on Saskatoon. It's a beautiful city, but I believe it has very similar problems to Regina. And I have no reason to believe that the number of people couch surfing would be hugely different in Saskatoon. In fact as I've heard my Saskatoon colleagues raise the issue, there is significant problems with rents rising, with housing prices rising, with apartment rentals rising in Saskatoon — very similar to the problems that there are in Regina.

So I stand potentially to be corrected, but I am firmly of the belief that . . . Let me state it a little more solidly. I am firmly of the opinion, the knowledge that there's roughly 3,000 people in Regina that are couch surfing. And it would be my belief that Saskatoon would have something within 50 per cent, one way or the other, of that. So it could be as low as, you know, 2,000

people, and it could be as high as 4,500 people in Saskatoon that are couch surfing and that the Bill 162, *The Local Government Election Act* is trying to disenfranchise.

[15:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are significant of us in this Chamber that get elected with fewer votes than what is being proposed under this Act to disenfranchise in either of our two major cities. And that's not talking about the 10 or 11 other cities in Saskatchewan that also will also have some proportional issue with homelessness.

I know that our number one son and daughter-in-law that have just moved from Estevan to Regina spoke to me often about how tight the market was in Estevan, and how . . . A beautiful city, please don't try and think I'm trying to represent Estevan as anything other than a beautiful city. But it's a beautiful city that has some problems, as do all of the other cities, as do all of the municipalities, of our province.

There are problems everywhere, Mr. Speaker. There are problems everywhere. And the problems, Mr. Speaker, need solutions, and this Bill 162 is not part of the solution, Mr. Speaker. It is not part of the solution. Okay. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the government that got elected on a position, a platform of being open and accountable has been anything but in far too many areas. It's been anything but open and accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Agriculture is very proud of the Agriculture budget and what they're spending on farm families here in Saskatchewan. I want to tell you to put it into perspective. In 1991-92, our very first budget when we hacked and slashed and cut and we cut things, even including, Mr. Speaker, we cut the prescription drug plan that had already been cut by the Devine government before we got elected, but we further cut it. Why? Because we couldn't meet payroll. We had discussions around what it would mean to declare bankruptcy in Saskatchewan. And members opposite just have no idea what that's like, and thankfully you don't. The sad news is, you'll be gone when we get in any difficulty like that again, Mr. Speaker. I just hope it doesn't take so long.

In 1991-92, after we had done huge cutting, the Agriculture budget was 6.2 per cent of program spending. This year, Minister of Agriculture, your Ag budget is 3.9 per cent of total program spending. So put it into perspective, absolutely. Ask the farmers how they feel, and the farmers are feeling like whatever they want to.

But the truth of the matter is from 6.2 per cent of programs funding under the NDP at our lowest, to 3.9 per cent today . . .

An Hon. Member: — Point of order. Point of order.

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Deputy House Leader and ask him to state his point of order.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're debating Bill No. 162, *The Local Government Election Amendment Act*. The member rose to speak to that Bill. And from what I've heard, he has not been speaking to that Bill, so I

would encourage him to do so.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I just want to remind members that a long-standing tradition in the Assembly, while we ask members to stick to the Bill, we've also allowed some latitude in the Bill. And we do have now the new rules that allow for 20 hours of debate on Bills including the committee, and so I would ask the member to certainly earmark and gear his remarks to the Bill. But also recognizing the fact that members can draw, well sometimes they draw long strings. We ask the member to refrain from the long string and address the Bill before us.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Bill 162, the election amendment Act, I know that the government is sensitive of being reminded of their shortcomings. But that's really what an election is all about, is holding governments accountable for their errors and giving governments, in this case, the opportunity to make some corrections.

I have offered up, as have speaker after speaker after speaker, on the government . . . on the opposition side — the soon-to-be-government side — but on the opposition New Democrat side we have offered up opportunities for the government to stand up and say, we're wrong with respect to photo ID. We're wrong to disenfranchise.

I've been talking about homeless people and people in shelters. Mr. Speaker, I haven't even talked about seniors, seniors who many are increasingly giving up their driver's licence, which is the key point of entry to get a photo ID that is being required under Bill 162. Seniors who, as they age, tend to want to drive less and less, Mr. Speaker. My father still has a driver's licence, still drives. Thankfully, he's able to. But I know he's getting less and less comfortable as the years go by. The time is going to come when like his father, my late grandfather, he may give up, may choose to give up his driver's licence. When he does, he will soon thereafter lose that element of photo ID.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is what this government is just deaf to. They don't seem to understand that photo ID is a significant hardship for a significant number of people. When you lose your driver's licence, either it's yanked away from you by SGI or some medical problem or you voluntarily give it up, either way, going someplace to get a photo ID becomes increasingly difficult.

Why would we want to say to people that have spent their lifetime, most of them, building this province, making it what we inherited, making it the most vibrant and wonderful province in Canada, why would we want to say to those people, oh you're old. You don't count any more. You're too old. You can't vote. You have no photo ID. Besides that, you're old and wrinkly. Why would you want to have photo ID? Mr. Speaker, what a shame that the Sask Party government feels that way about our seniors. I say it's a shame. And if they cared about the people that built this province, they would withdraw that requirement for photo ID under *The Local Government Election Act*.

Mr. Speaker, clearly I've stated the biggest area of concern. I know that other people on our side of government want to speak of other problems with this legislation. I know that our biggest

problem is the photo ID. And I know that if that issue went away, there are parts of this local election Act, Bill 162, that we would be honoured to support.

The part that extends the term of office from three to four years, I understand it's a welcome thing. And we would have absolutely no problem supporting that. There are some other minor things that help make the process for the clerks and the electoral office, make it easier and more consistent for them to do their jobs and enhance democracy. We'd be proud to support all of the measures that enhance and grow a democracy, but we're not very pleased about the photo ID.

Mr. Speaker, I know other members on the New Democrat opposition side have things they want to speak to on Bill 162. So at this time I move that debate be adjourned on Bill 162.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Coronation Park 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. 159

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

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — I wish to rise and make a few comments on the Bill No. 159, *The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2010*.

Mr. Speaker, we all know it's important to review legislation from time to time, make adjustments that would make this legislation more effective, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And in looking at this Bill and the government's release, there is an intention here to update the university Act and allow for improvements to governance processes and to make it more efficient.

Some of the amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are in repealing the visitor section in the Act. We have enabling the university to adopt new processes for election of a chancellor and senate representatives. Again the minister indicates that these were requested by the university, which is a slight change particularly in this, with this minister in terms of contacting consulting groups. Not really known for that. But in this case, with the university, apparently the university has indicated that they are somewhat satisfied with what the minister has done. But again for us, when this becomes almost a first, then we . . . You can understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we would have . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce

guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through to the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce Murray McGillivray who is a rancher from the Big Muddy area and a good friend of mine. And with Murray today is Henry McCarty who is a veterinarian from Wawota. I'll have the opportunity to meet with them very shortly, but I just want everyone to welcome them to their legislature.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Regina and our universities in Saskatchewan are world-class institutions, and as they change, we need to update our legislation. If it comes to terms of making them more efficient, then we should be looking at that. And in that way my understanding is, is that they have come up with the Bill 59, an Act to amend the university Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the important things was that the University of Regina went into making up a review, a strategic plan which they looked at. And this was, University of Regina President Vianne Timmons announced this strategic plan in order to build a better university here in Saskatchewan. And the plan details are for the years 2009 through to 2014, a strategic planning process. I would just like to at this time sort of briefly look at the executive summary of that.

There were consultations were launched in January of 2009. And again here, when I speak of this, this is probably a bit of a lesson for the minister who perhaps would have been well . . . Had something like this come before him, is sort of a class in terms of how one consults before bringing in legislation, how to consult stakeholders, as that party over there has been somewhat, if I could say, played fast and loose with that particular aspect of the legislative process. Oftentimes we have many examples of them saying they've consulted with groups when in fact they hadn't.

So it was a bit positive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see that in fact that this was coming, that the university had done all this work, gathered information from consultations, submissions in terms of putting together their goals and objectives that would form what they would say is *mâmahwahkamâtowin*: Our Work, Our

People, Our Communities, and organize their future under these three headings — our work, our people, and our communities — again for a new Saskatchewan that they were looking forward to, new in cultural, economic, and demographic sense, and coming into being.

So with that sort of as a backgrounder, some requests were made for changes. I mentioned just some of them previously. Again we on this side are fully committed to having a world-class facility committed to the students within that facility, and at that we are very interested in looking at those requests from the university in this. Again that was, as I say, a relatively new experience from that minister, having in fact consulted or . . . how many times we've asked questions of who was requesting the changes and that minister was unable to provide those answers.

[15:45]

Now again I just, perhaps . . . One part out of that study that was important that I would like to just read into the record, a submission, "Increase our administrative efficiency and enhance productivity." And in there, in the study directly, it says:

Even a middle-sized university like ours is a complex organization. Federal and provincial reporting audit requirements, workplace safety regulations, and a host of other obligations to external funding agencies create considerable administrative demands. Internal processes such as the review of proposed new academic programs can also require disproportionate time and effort.

[And now] whether they are carried out centrally or within academic units, our administrative processes must serve and respect our core mission of teaching, research, and public service. We will therefore routinely review our administrative processes, policies, and practices to ensure they are efficient, meet our requirements, and do not unnecessarily hinder the productivity of faculty and staff. We will invest in appropriate technology to increase efficiency and enhance productivity.

With that background, the university obviously came forward and requested that some changes be made. We will still be . . . Obviously we still have work to do in terms of talking to the stakeholders to make sure that all their needs have been met here and to see the impact of the legislation on that to actually meet the goals. Again, if in fact the amendments as requested by the university to understanding them . . . And after looking somewhat at the document, if they are in fact being met and if in fact the proper consultations were there, we would feel less wary of the changes being proposed here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I just want to say that there have been, I mean, numerous examples. I think many people on our side have gone over the concerns that we have in terms of consultations or lack thereof from that side, from the government side. In this case, it does appear that they have listened to the university in creating the efficiencies and things that the university has . . . And it may be a small part. There are many more things to do, but all those steps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are positive.

We would still be looking and again, as I said, making sure that all the consultation, the stakeholders feel well about this. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that I would be adjourning debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Fairview has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 159, *The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 144

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

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to have the opportunity to speak today in adjourned debates as we look at Bill 144, *An Act to amend The Litter Control Act*.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to talk about this because of course when it comes to issues of the environment and controlling litter and issues of recycling, that of course is a very important thing and something that all Saskatchewan people — at least, most Saskatchewan people, I believe — certainly care about and hold as a high priority.

The recycling amenities that we have available to us as Saskatchewan citizens, there are many good and positive ones that range in the types of services that are provided. That being said, Mr. Speaker, we also recognize that there's a lot more to do with respect to having an effective recycling program in the province, a more effective recycling program in the province. Having lived in some other jurisdictions, I know there are places in the world that have a more comprehensive strategy with respect to access to blue boxes and a complete recycling availability in urban centres and non-urban centres as well.

This piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, while it's under the banner of *The Litter Control Act*, it is a bit more specific in its intent to addressing a problem. It has to do with the deposits that are collected on beverage containers here in the province. And for a good number of years, Mr. Speaker, there has been a process in place where individuals who purchase a beverage product, there is a deposit paid on those items. And it's a process that has worked quite well for our province when you look at the role of Sarcán in Saskatchewan, as it provides employment for many people in the province in urban centres and smaller centres as well, and a good geographical distribution across the province.

We know that Sarcán has played a very, very positive role in many communities. And Sarcán has a very, very high rate of recycling the beverage materials, beverage containers that are purchased throughout the province, very high compared to other jurisdictions. And I know as I travel or as members in the Assembly travel or people in the general public, when we go to

other provinces or states or parts of the world, we see recycling rates that are not as high as the rates that have been achieved by Sarcán. So I think that is a very positive thing. And as someone who's basically grown up with the Sarcán system, of course the benefits of holding on to those empty beverage containers and taking them into Sarcán, I know that's something that most Saskatchewan families do. And it's very much part of our culture in terms of instilling a need and a respect for recycling.

So, Mr. Speaker, the debate about how much further the recycling program ought to go and what it may look like in the years to come, that's a debate for another day because when we're looking at Bill No. 144, the reason for bringing Bill 144 is quite specific, as the minister identified in his second reading remarks. And the reason, Mr. Speaker, is basically to deal with a lawsuit that has been put through the court process that would have some major financial implications for the recycling system here in the province. And just for individuals who may be reading at home and this debate is new to them, I will read from the minister's second reading speech where he stated on page 6022 of *Hansard* on November 15th:

On December 31st, 2009, a law firm issued a statement of claim against the province. The statement of claim is seeking to recover the environmental handling charges imposed and collected under authority contained in *The Litter Control Act*. The claim is brought on behalf of a restaurant company that purchased liquor for resale on its premises. The statement of claim contends that the vendor should not be subject to the environmental handling charges because they do not meet the definition of a purchaser as stated in the Act.

So the problem, Mr. Speaker, that the province is facing here is that a lawsuit has been initiated by a restaurant because they do not feel like they meet the terms of a purchaser as defined by the Act. And the lawsuit is under way. And while the amount in question in this particular lawsuit is not immense — I think it says here a single claim of \$2,200 — when that amount is considered with respect to how it would have implications for many other businesses and situations here in the province, it becomes more significant.

So the minister went on to state in his second reading remarks that it was the ministry's opinion that they, in a sense, do not have a leg to stand on in opposing this lawsuit and that the ministry would lose and be responsible.

So what this piece of legislation does is it amends the existing legislation to retroactively change the law so that the lawsuit does not have a basis and the lawsuit would not be successful in seeking the \$2,200 amount, and thereby the implications for the rest of Saskatchewan's business community would not have a bearing on them.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's basically, it's a piece of legislation that's brought in to address a specific concern, which is a lawsuit that has been brought forward by a restaurant. And the legislation that's being brought in in this amendment is to retroactively change the law so that the lawsuit does not have a basis and will not be successful. So that is the reason for this amendment and that is what it is seeking to solve or address.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this type of action, I want to be very clear that in my opinion, this type of behaviour by a legislature should be a very, very rare thing. And this type of behaviour, going back and retroactively changing the law, should only be done so, Mr. Speaker, in rare circumstances where it is warranted. And it's my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the assessment by ministry officials in stating that there is not a sound basis of defence against the lawsuit, it's my hope that that is a correct assessment and it's my hope, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have certainly done their homework on this issue to ensure that it is a responsible thing to be doing, retroactively changing the law.

Yes, there's the supremacy of this body here with respect to the laws in the land, but going back and retroactively changing the law in order to cancel out a lawsuit that the province is facing is a very significant step and it's one that should not be taken lightly. It must occur with the proper debate, which is occurring in the House, and it must occur with the proper investigation by the ministry that this is in fact the proper course of action.

So I sincerely hope that that work has occurred and that the decision to retroactively go back and change the law has been done so with thorough and very thoughtful consideration and examination of the facts. Because we could think of . . . It doesn't take long for one's mind to think of other situations where it could be convenient for the government to retroactively go back and change the law. It could be a convenient way to get out of other troubling circumstances.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's a very serious thing when you're introducing legislation to retroactively solve a problem where individuals have been operating under a certain understanding for quite some time. So it could have very significant implications for other sectors of the economy and society, and serious implications for the role of this legislative body in introducing a law and treating everyone in society in a fair and equitable manner.

So, Mr. Speaker, with Bill 144 as I wrap up my remarks, it's tied into legislation to do with the recycling process, the structure of the recycling process here in Saskatchewan with respect to the collection of deposits on beverage containers. And the legislation, the amendments that we're looking at have been brought in order to address a lawsuit that the government is facing with respect to the collection of deposits for beverage containers. And the legislation has been brought in because it was the ministry's belief that it would lose the lawsuit and be responsible for paying damages to this one individual — there was one group as well — which would thereby have implications for the broader sector.

And so this piece of legislation is being brought in to address that issue so that the lawsuit would not be successful. It's my opinion that this type of action by a legislature or parliament must be done so only in very rare circumstances and must be done so only with very, very thoughtful consideration about the implications and the consequences of this action, and a thorough examination to determine that such extraordinary measures are in fact in order and appropriate and the best way to solve the problem. Because it's a very serious matter when the law is retroactively being changed to cancel out a lawsuit.

So I hope that work has been done. And I hope that the government, in using its majority to bring this legislation through, is making the right decision based on the information it has available to them and the research that has been done. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on this Bill and move to adjourn debate on this Bill. Thank you so much.

[16:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Massey Place has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 144, *The Litter Control Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 155

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

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, once again it is truly a privilege and an honour for me to have the opportunity to enter into this debate on behalf of the fine people of Regina Northeast. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Bill that we're debating here today is Bill 155, *An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act*.

Mr. Speaker, any time, any time a government enters into making amendments to legislation, one has to be fairly mindful that one wants to scrutinize those amendments to ensure that they have the desired effect that I think the government wants to achieve, and certainly the desired effect that the people of Saskatchewan would like to see.

So in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, I say that this Bill is sort of a mixed bag. There's parts of which is just simply housekeeping, with some name changes and some amendments to reflect the government's decision to move from departments to ministries, and that was required, I guess. Part of the legal process was required to make those changes into the Act. So we certainly see that and of course, Mr. Speaker, like I say, it's housekeeping so it's fairly straightforward.

But at the same time, there are aspects of the Act that causes one to be a little concerned, particularly around the financial impact or the economic impact these changes may have. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in the past *The Natural Resources Act* certainly housed the wildlife . . . The Fish and Wildlife Development Fund was housed under this particular Act and governed under this particular Act. And now, Mr. Speaker, the administration of this fund is now being changed by the government's suggestions, changes at least within this legislation, and it would now result in the . . . being established a fish and wildlife development advisory council is to be established. So, Mr. Speaker, the council consists of not more

than seven members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in accordance with the subsections of (3) and (5) in this particular Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, one would hope that the government would look at providing the opposition and the good folks of Saskatchewan a little more information in regards to the makeup of this particular advisory council, and to ensure that the membership there would certainly reflect the wide range of those groups and individuals who have an interest in our wildlife and the preserving of wildlife in our great province of ours which . . . Mr. Speaker, I think it goes without saying that the preservation of wildlife, the habitat for wildlife certainly is a very important part of our economy of our province because it generates a lot of dollars, tourism dollars, and a lot of sporting activity dollars within this great province of ours.

And when we look at Saskatchewan, and for those of us who've had the opportunity to travel this great province, we know that there is a lot of areas of the province which is really suitable to wildlife and we must maintain those areas so that we maintain the habitat for wildlife so that wildlife flourishes. And we want to make sure that that's the case so that we have . . . well first of all that generations to come have the opportunity to enjoy the opportunity to see wildlife in its natural habitat, to be able to travel into the forests or into our grasslands and see the wildlife that's native to this province of ours and this country, and to see it in its natural habitat. Because there's a rare beauty there that you can only appreciate if you take the time to watch and watch the activities of various species as they go about their time on this great earth.

And, Mr. Speaker, the same can be applied to our fisheries. Certainly we have a landscape of Saskatchewan dotted with many lakes, those in the South, and those in the South which are really used in a lot of cases by southern sportspeople who enjoy fishing . . . And I must say, Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to the increased opportunity of doing that myself. As you know, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure the colleagues here, that I intend to not seek re-election in the next election and I'm looking at having even a little more free time so that I can enjoy the great outdoors. And a part of that, of course, would be doing some fishing, Mr. Speaker, and I would be looking forward to that. And I would be hoping that some of my colleagues on either side of the House would find the opportunity to join me. I would enjoy the company.

But, Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, but more importantly not only for us in the present generation but for future generations, we must endeavour to ensure that we have strong fisheries and our lakes continue to be very active with the fish population, as well as ensure that the wildlife of our great province of ours continue to flourish and do well.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the activity, the economic activity that surrounds wildlife and that activity brings dollars, simply dollars to our economy, simply brings dollars to our communities and can bring dollars to our businesses throughout this province because there is a real commerce around wildlife and a real commerce around the sporting activity that surrounds that. And it's not only just in the upfront things like buying fishing rods or fishing hooks or perhaps even boats and motors. There's the whole economy around maintaining that equipment.

It's always a whole economy around all the sporting good equipment including, Mr. Speaker, quadding. I, like many others I'm sure are in this Assembly, enjoy the opportunities whenever they come at hand to get out and enjoy nature and to do so from the back of a quad, so to speak. And I think when we're quadding, we have to ensure that we are mindful of our surroundings. We are mindful that we don't do any untold, unwanted damage to our wildlife habitats, and so we have to be mindful of that, Mr. Speaker. But it is truly an opportunity to be a part of nature and to get out there and to enjoy the wildlife as it presents itself in its natural habitat to us, and to enjoy the time and to relax.

And sometimes I think, Mr. Speaker, we don't get enough of that and we don't do enough of that and we don't spend enough time just simply enjoying mother nature and enjoying the joys and the beauty that mother nature provides to us. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, that opportunity is provided to us usually free of costs. You can really enjoy yourself and relax and have a great time by just spending a little time and enjoying what mother nature's provided for us — as the saying goes, taking a little time to smell the flowers as we go by.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a real need to ensure that the amendments that the government's proposing here as far as the establishment of the fish and wildlife development advisory committee are amendments that are in the best interests of the industry, are in the best interests of the individuals of this great province who really enjoy the wildlife and the great outdoors, and are in the best interests of, quite frankly, the wildlife and the fish industry in itself.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why it is important when government makes changes, makes amendments to an Act, that they do so thoughtfully. And in order to do that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the government has to look at getting feedback from the front-line people on the issue. And in this particular issue I would say it would be the front-line people. It would be those who find much of their livelihood is generated from the activities of sportsmen, whether it be in the fishing industry or whether it be in hunting, or it might be a combination of both, Mr. Speaker.

And that would be people who are . . . certainly the Outfitters Association would be one of those that I would have hoped that the government had serious consultations with before they made the recommendations for these amendments. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we look at Ducks Unlimited. They are a very renowned body of people who are very interested in wildlife and the preservation of wildlife in this great province of ours, and I would really wonder if the government took time to sit down with the Ducks Unlimited people and talk to them about these proposed changes.

Or better yet, Mr. Speaker, rather than talk to wildlife organizations and officials about proposed changes, ask them what changes they would like to see done. Ask them what they think are the changes that would most benefit the people of Saskatchewan, the industry as a whole and, of course, mother nature and the wildlife that we so desire to protect.

Mr. Speaker, one then begins to wonder: what level of consultation did this government actually carry out, and who

did they consult with? Did they carry out consultations with any of the organizations that represent sportsmen and the entire sporting industry, such as the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation? Did the government sit down and discuss these proposed changes with the Wildlife Federation? Or yet better, Mr. Speaker, did they have the opportunity to sit down with the Wildlife Federation and ask their input and ask them what they thought would be the changes that would be most beneficial to the industry as a whole?

Mr. Speaker, it is that approach that I think is in the best interests of any industry is for our government . . . And I believe that governments of all political stripes certainly want to make changes that are in the best interests of the industry and would certainly want to make changes that are in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that this government did take the initiative to contact the various stakeholders, the various organizations that are very heavily involved in wildlife and fishing and ask them what they thought would be the most appropriate changes to be made that would be in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, but also in the best interests of the industry and best interests of the wildlife.

So, Mr. Speaker, we ask, like what prompted these changes? What prompted the government to bring forward this amendment? Was the government approached? Did somebody or some organization approach the government and say that these changes were necessary? And how was it determined, Mr. Speaker, that these changes were needed? Did they simply take the word of an individual or individuals, or did they meet with groups? Or did they have some scientific evidence to back it up that says these changes have to be made? Or is there some other hidden agenda here, Mr. Speaker, that would move the thrust, I guess you would say, from the fund to the advisory council, and that control will then be held in the hands of a maximum of seven individuals? So, Mr. Speaker, that is again a question: why was that done?

And if there was consultation done, Mr. Speaker, and I will have to assume there was. I will simply assume there was. I don't know that there was but, for the argument's sake, we'll simply assume there was consultation done. Then I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, is what method was used to do the consulting?

Did the government simply contact one or two or a handful of individuals who are involved in the industry and then direct, direct the conversation by saying, here are four or five changes we want to make and what do you think of it? And therefore narrow the debate down to simply the changes that the government wanted to make. Or a more open approach would've been for government to have approached representation from the industry and say, what do you think? What changes do you think need to be done to enhance the industry, to better, make a better situation for the wildlife, that we can ensure that our wildlife continues to thrive in this province, but also so that the industry that supports that and supports the sporting activity around that continues to thrive?

Mr. Speaker, again, you know, who did the government talk to, and what method did they use to talk to them? Was there some type of a public process? Was there public meetings held? Or

did the government simply direct its comments to a very narrow group of individuals that are identified as representation of the industry?

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, what was the reaction to that, to the consulting that the government did? The government did go out and consult. And the government did talk to individuals and individual groups and those who are noted individuals within the industry, and then what was their reaction? Did they wholly support the amendments that the government's proposing? Or did they have comments and suggestions that these amendments should be changed, should be perhaps different than what's being proposed by the government here in this particular Bill? So, Mr. Speaker, that certainly raises a lot of questions.

And probably the most straightforward one, Mr. Speaker, that the government has missed as far as the opposition is concerned, I think as far as the people's concerned, of this great province, and that is a simple question, is how will these changes, how will these changes affect the people of Saskatchewan? How will these changes affect the people who are involved in the sporting industry? How will these . . . Not only the sportsmen, Mr. Speaker, not only those who participate in hunting activities and those who participate in the fishing activities both summer and winter and even those, Mr. Speaker, in the northern parts of our province who actually make a living from the fishing industry — our, certainly, fishing industry is very important to part of their yearly and family income, Mr. Speaker — how will these changes affect these folks? And to what extent did the government consult on these changes to ensure that the changes do not have a negative effect on people . . . [inaudible] . . . rather than having a positive effect? And I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that is what the government would wish would happen, is that the effects of changes would be positive to the people of this great province.

And also, Mr. Speaker, a question that I would have is, you know, how will these changes improve the welfare and the livelihood of the people of this great province? And will it have a positive effect? Can we point to some mechanism or some method as a result of the changes that's being proposed by the government here, in the amendments to these Bills, that will improve the life of people in this great province, whether they be involved in the industry or not, whether they be a sportsman or whether they be somebody who is directly involved in the industry, of ensuring the opportunity is there for people to participate in either the fishing activities or hunting activities? How will this improve their lives? How will this make their living perhaps a little better?

So, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly a lot of Bills . . . a lot of questions around this Bill, I should say, that haven't been answered and certainly need to be answered. And I think the government has certainly not been able to address that certainly with the information that they've provided both the opposition and the general public.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, we're going to need more time to do further research and to contact many of the stakeholders within the industry to get their impression of these proposed amendments and to get a sense from them as to whether or not

the government has done a reasonable job of consulting and has been able to capture their comments and their thoughts on the changes as proposed under this Bill and to ensure that these amendments are in the best interest of the industry and the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

So with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity to have that time. And my colleagues I'm sure will have comments that they wish to make on this particular Bill. So with that in mind, I will move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Northeast has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 155, *The Natural Resources 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 Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with a certain sense of gravity that I rise to participate in today's debate on Bill No. 160, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010*.

Saskatchewan of course, in different fields, has led the way not just nationally but internationally in different measures taken throughout the years. Saskatchewan is widely regarded as the home of medicare. And that of course took place, the big step, one of the big steps forward in that fight, Mr. Speaker, took place in 1947 with the introduction of hospitalization insurance, and of course on through the medicare disputes, and on from that and to a place where health care is regarded as one of the distinguishing features of which Canadians define themselves and of which they are very proud.

One of the other measures that took place in that time frame when hospitalization insurance was coming forward, Mr. Speaker, was the introduction of the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights, the first bill of rights introduced in a Canadian jurisdiction, 1947. One of the people that was very much involved in the drafting of that piece of legislation was an individual named Frank Scott, who was long the dean of the McGill law school and one of the people that was a huge influence on the thinking and thought of Pierre Trudeau and the way that that in turn translated into something like the Charter of Rights.

The work in Saskatchewan also, in 1947, presaged the introduction of the Diefenbaker government's introduction of the bill of rights, I believe in the late '50s, and of course led into the work that brought about the introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So Saskatchewan has played a leadership role and had influence beyond its borders in a myriad of ways when it comes to the question of human rights and how that is addressed in Canada. And it's no small feat, or it's no small thing for a government to bring forward amendments to that legislation. And certainly it's a fairly heavy question that we are here to consider with the introduction of Bill No. 160.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, I'll state off the top, some of the language that's been used in the defence of this legislation around the promotion of education and the introduction of perhaps human rights curricula in the public school system, these are all aims that are laudable, ensuring that people have a more streamlined, a better pace of action when they pursue something through the Human Rights Code and through the human rights system in this province. Again the stated goal is the expediting of procedure — again a fairly laudable objective.

But the objectives, and as laudable as they are to my mind, Mr. Speaker, do not measure up to what we find in the legislation and what we find in certain critiques of the legislation as brought forward and then the way that the consultation has taken place around that legislation.

I'll also state that certainly the current Human Rights Commissioner is somebody that I think did a tremendous piece of work for the province in his tenure as the treaty commissioner, you know, widely popularizing the treaty education and the notion that we are in fact all treaty people. And certainly I have a great deal of respect for the Human Rights Commissioner. But I guess the way that this debate has unfolded, the Human Rights Commissioner I think has come to the fore as the end-all, be-all defender of this legislation.

And certainly the Minister of Justice . . . This is a Bill that's brought forward by the government. And the work that should normally be done by the Minister of Justice in explaining and persuading or perhaps rethinking some of the measures brought forward, it seems to be, that normal process seems to be a bit clouded in this. But I think it's important to remember that, at the end of the day, the Minister of Justice speaks for the government on these matters. This is a government Bill. And the concerns that we have on this legislation, the concerns that I have on this legislation, I certainly lay at the feet of that minister and of this government.

Now again the goals around greater possibilities for education, expediting the process, and having a greater reach of human rights in the province, does that measure up? And what is it about the current legislation that needs fixing? And that is something that has yet to be explained in any sort of satisfactory way, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's helpful to look at the legislation that's under question, not just the amendments. But what does the existing legislation have to say about the current regime that supposedly cries out for remedy?

I guess first off in the current legislation as it exists under section 47 of the legislation . . . pardon me, under section 3 of the legislation, right at the top of the legislation it lays out what are the objects of the Act, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. And what are those objects? And I quote from the legislation, Mr. Speaker:

Objects

3 The objects of this Act are:

(a) to promote recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal inalienable rights of all members of the human family; and

(b) to . . . [promote] public policy in Saskatchewan that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights and to discourage and eliminate discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, that is a fairly broad and inspiring mandate for the legislation. Objectives like that could hardly be construed as prescriptive or constraining the ability of, again, the promotion of “. . . recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal inalienable rights of all members of the human family” or the furthering of “. . . public policy in Saskatchewan that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights and to discourage and eliminate discrimination.”

What is it about those objectives, Mr. Speaker, that cry out for amendment? And I would argue that those amendments . . . that these objectives, pardon me, Mr. Speaker, these objectives should stand. These objectives should . . . They say a lot and they say it well, Mr. Speaker. So we don't see that the objectives that are enshrined in the legislation as it currently exists pose any sort of undue challenge for the legislation or for the Human Rights Commission, and we think they should stand.

It's also worthwhile, Mr. Speaker, to look at what are the duties of the commission, and those are found in section 25 of the current Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. And the duties of the commission are enumerated as follows: “The commission shall . . .” And that's an important word to note, Mr. Speaker, and I'll come back to that in a moment:

The commission shall:

(a) forward the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to religion, creed, marital status, family status, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, colour, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, race or perceived race or receipt of public assistance.

That's section (a), Mr. Speaker. Section (b) to promote, the commission shall:

(b) promote an understanding and acceptance of, and compliance with, this Act;

Section (c), section 25:

(c) develop and conduct educational programs designed to eliminate discriminatory practices;

Again if I can add parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, one of the guises that the amendments are brought forward under is the ability to engender further educational work. And on the other hand, we find that enshrined in the legislation as it's written and as it's enshrined in law right this very day, Mr. Speaker. Section 25:

(d) disseminate information and promote understanding of the legal rights of residents of the province and conduct educational programs in that respect;

Again building on the educational mandate of the Human Rights Code and of the commission. Section 25:

(e) further the principle of the equality of opportunities for persons, and equality in the exercise of the legal rights of persons, regardless of their status;

Section 25:

(f) conduct and encourage research by persons and associations actively engaged in the field of promoting human rights;

And section 25:

(g) forward the principle that cultural diversity is a basic human right and fundamental human value.

[16:30]

And again, Mr. Speaker, in a province where our very motto is “from many peoples, strength” that reflects the spirit that presides in this current legislation. It reflects the duties of the commission that have been enumerated in section 25. And we think that again there's a fairly substantial set of duties that the commission is not only tasked with performing but absolutely should be performing, Mr. Speaker.

So we've looked at the objects of the legislation. We've looked at the duties of the commission. And I think it's also further instructive as to what can be done under the Human Rights Code. And for this we turn to section 47(1), under “Programs, orders, or approval of by commission.” 47(1) reads:

On the application of any person or on its own initiative, the commission may approve or order any program to be undertaken by any person if the program is designed to prevent disadvantages that are likely to be suffered by, or to eliminate or reduce disadvantages that are suffered by, any group of individuals when these disadvantages would be or are based on or related to the race, creed, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, disability, age, nationality, ancestry or place of origin of members of that group, or the receipt of public assistance by members of that group by improving opportunities respecting services, facilities, accommodation, employment or education in relation to that group or the receipt of public assistance by members of that group.

Again, Mr. Speaker, section 47(1) talks about what can be done under the section. And there is an awful lot that can be done under the current Human Rights Code. So I look at the current Human Rights Code. Mr. Speaker, I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a human rights lawyer, but I certainly am a legislator and proud to be so. And I look at the current legislation and what is proposed under the amendments and I don't see how, in this regard, there are changes required.

So we get into, who is it that has problems? What was the voices that have come forward to date, Mr. Speaker, in critique of this legislation? And I talked about Frank Scott, earlier on and some of the concerns or some of the legacy of Professor Scott when it comes to the constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and certainly *The Saskatchewan Bill of Rights* of 1947. Certainly another monumental name in recent constitutional affairs is that of Dr. John Whyte. And Dr. John Whyte is one of those that has enumerated concerns with the current piece of legislation as it's being brought forward and is urging reconsideration.

Another voice that is raised in criticism of this legislation and a voice that I find to be of particular interest, Mr. Speaker, is that of the general secretary of Amnesty International. The general secretary of Amnesty International, I should state for the record, Mr. Speaker, is an individual named Alex Neve. He's a member of the Order of Canada, and of course he's the general secretary for the Canadian section of an international organization that has won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in the defence and promotion of human rights. So when Amnesty International does its work and when they come forward with concerns being raised, you would think that would give some pause for thought.

And I should say on a personal basis, Mr. Speaker, Amnesty International, one of the first ways that I gained a broader awareness of the world around me and the issues that we face as a human family had to do with the Conspiracy of Hope concert in the summer of 1986. And one of the bands that was involved in that, Mr. Speaker, artists that had come forward to use their talents to advance the cause of human rights and to try and get some freedom, to get some redress for different prisoners of conscience that were held by dictatorships around the world, one of the bands that was involved in that was U2.

And of course in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we've heard no lesser light than the Premier, the member from Swift Current quote the words of the leader of U2, Bono, in reference to different legislation. So you know, I don't think I'm alone in the impact that bands like U2 had on my consciousness and the way that it helped me to think about the world around me and the issues that were going on.

And I guess one of the things that was notable about that concert series, Mr. Speaker, was the way that it used popular culture to make a political case, to make a human rights case against some horrible situations that existed around the world and the way that played into fighting apartheid in South Africa or fighting the use of torture in different regimes around the world. And again of those six prisoners of conscience that had been held, there were two that were released not long after that concert series, demonstrating the ability of people that have a talent, people that have the public eye through popular culture, to use those talents for good and to use them in a political way, if I can say so, Mr. Speaker.

And so that is where Amnesty International entered into my consciousness. And I think it had something to do with the interest that I grew to take in the affairs of the world and of my community. And I think Amnesty International has certainly played a role like that for many people, Mr. Speaker. But most importantly what it's done is to fight the abuses of human rights

that are evident in the world around us, to hold out that candle of hope in the darkness of different dictatorships and to bring forward the case of people that are otherwise being silenced.

And if you think about it, Mr. Speaker, that is at the base of what human rights is all about. It's the right to live like a human and to not be oppressed or to be treated poorly for who you are on this Earth, for being a human being.

And I think of the work that Amnesty International has done generally and the work that they have done certainly on a global basis that led to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to this organization. But I also think specifically about the way that the Stolen Sisters reports on the missing or murdered Aboriginal women, the way that Amnesty International was able to focus attention and to galvanize action on behalf of the Stolen Sisters and to shine a light of hope on some pretty horrendous situations, Mr. Speaker.

And again the work that Amnesty International set in play with Stolen Sisters or the way that they were able to focus attention and to focus the public debate on how criminal it was that there were Aboriginal women that had been murdered or had gone missing for really fundamentally no other reason than being an Aboriginal woman, and the way that they shone a light on the sort of structural dynamics at play, but the way that they shone a light on the very human tragedy of these situations, Mr. Speaker.

Again when Amnesty International speaks up on an issue, again I take notice, and I know I'm not alone in that. So it was with great interest that I came to learn of the concerns of Amnesty International as it relates to this legislation. And again Amnesty International is not alone in registering some of these concerns, but I certainly think that when it comes to the proper promotion or the abuse of human rights, Amnesty International has a certain authoritative quality when it comes to what they have to say about whether or not a piece of legislation is in fact promoting human rights, whether in fact it's progressive or whether it's not.

And again something I'd like to quote from at length or perhaps read into the record, Mr. Speaker, is a letter that we've obtained a copy of that was written from the Canadian Secretary-General Alex Neve of the Canadian section Amnesty International, to the Minister of Justice of this government. It's dated December 10th, and it states:

Dear Minister,

Amnesty International is writing this open letter to urge you to reconsider the plans for reform of Saskatchewan's laws and institutions for the protection of human rights in the province, as contained in Bill 160, which you recently introduced in the provincial legislature.

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

complex, formal and time-consuming.

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

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

Carrying on in the letter:

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

And I underline that again, Mr. Speaker:

Amnesty International considers that to be the best practice.

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

Minister, systems for the protection of human rights can most certainly benefit from ongoing improvement. I'm writing to you on International Human Rights Day, which marks the 62nd anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is an apt occasion to call on you and your government to commit to an approach to reform that would strengthen and not risk undermining provincial human rights protection. In that spirit, we urge that, rather than proceed with Bill 160 at this time, your government launch a public consultation process to consider possible reforms that would strengthen the province's human rights laws and institutions.

Sincerely,
Alex Neve
Secretary General

Amnesty International, Canadian section.

[16:45]

So Amnesty International, the Canadian section, again an organization that has won the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in the defence and promotion of human rights around this globe. Amnesty International, an organization which, never in my memory, Mr. Speaker, has weighed in on a matter of provincial legislation in this province of ours, is saying that this is a Bill that should be pulled back and reconsidered. And I guess, you know, maybe this government of the day is fine with flouting the opinions of what are obviously experts in the field, Mr. Speaker. But I guess they can't have it both ways. They can't call this legislation progressive in the one breath and then go ahead despite the concerns raised by people like Alex Neve of Amnesty International and still hold themselves forward as some kind of example of being progressive.

This legislation . . . Secretary General Neve holds out some of the concerns that they as Amnesty International have with what this will do to not just the human rights that exist but almost equally as important, Mr. Speaker, the enforcement, the ability to defend those human rights. They hold that out as a huge concern and it's one that we certainly share as the official opposition and that I certainly share as a legislator.

As part of the evolving debate that picked up steam around this legislation and as people looked more between the stated intent and what are some of the pieces in the legislation as they actually impact — it's the ability to secure human rights here in the province — they came to be much more aware of the fact of what kind of power is being consolidated in the hands of the Chief Commissioner, where words like what is warranted and what is reasonable become a judgment call for the Chief Commissioner. Power taken out of the hands of the tribunals and put solely in the hands of one individual.

And again, Mr. Speaker, one of the points, as I understand them as a layperson when it comes to matters of constitutional law, when it comes to things like charters of rights and bills of rights, there's certainly an interpretive role to be played by the courts, and certainly we see that as different measures roll forwards in the post-implementation era of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. But the law is prescriptive, and necessarily so by its very nature. It makes it . . . It very narrowly confines the powers of one individual or another to, you know, if they're a good person and you agree with them, maybe one set of decisions come out. When you have something that's enshrined in law, it very much solidifies and gainsays those rights.

So as we see the Human Rights Code put forward, as I'd provided an overview of the objectives and the duties and the means that are available to the Human Rights Commission earlier, we see those things being enshrined in law as very important. But we also see that, with the proposed legislation and the way that it's been defended, the grounds that are being defended, I think in many ways, are certainly able to be pursued

under the law as it exists. That educational mandate that's garnered such attention, I don't see what there is in the current Human Rights Code that detracts or dissuades from pursuit of those education initiatives.

But what we do see in the legislation being brought forward is that consolidation of power, a less than adequate consultation process, a bit of confusion in terms of whose Bill this is. And again, Mr. Speaker, we're very clear on this side that this is a Bill of this government and it's a Bill of that Minister of Justice. And again the kind of expert voices that are coming forward, the authoritative voices that are coming forward saying that this is something that should be reconsidered.

And I guess again there's another piece of work that Mr. Neve has done on behalf of the discussion around this debate and a debate that took place in Saskatoon at the start of this month, Mr. Speaker, and it's available on the Amnesty International Canada Saskatchewan website. But in enumerating what are the concerns or expanding upon the concerns that he had identified in his letter to the minister of December 10th, he talks about two concerns. Having heard that the consultation wasn't an open-ended consultation around this Bill, but rather it was sort of, here's the deal; respond to it as you will, the second concern that he had found expressed to him, and I quote:

... many have expressed concern to me that the consultations focused mainly on the four pillars and gave much less attention to the more controversial proposal related to the future of the human rights tribunal.

Mr. Neve comes forward with a number of what I think are helpful recommendations on how to improve the process, but he also comes forward with a concern around the powers that are being consolidated in the hands of the commissioner and how he sees that as negatively impacting the ability of the Human Rights Commission to do their work.

The first is with mediation and what constitutes a fair and reasonable offer of settlement and the way that that is placed squarely in one person's hands. He brings forward a second grounds of criticism around dismissal of human rights complaints where the commissioner can, on grounds that the complaint is not warranted, dismiss the complaint out of hand. And there's no explanation as to what are the guidelines for that, Mr. Speaker. A third area of concern is that there's no review or appeal of a decision to dismiss a complaint. So again does that aid the case of the pursuit of human rights?

I guess there are other things that certainly my colleagues will bring to the floor, Mr. Speaker, and certainly there's some things that are reiterated in the copy of the remarks made by Mr. Neve at the start of March in Saskatoon.

But for me I think it's like this: if you have somebody as authoritative as Amnesty International coming to your province to tell you that a piece of legislation that deals with the Human Rights Code is ill-considered, you would think that it would behoove the government to sit up and take note because when ... And I know that I've not been around this House for a long time, but I am a student of the history of this place, Mr. Speaker, and I cannot recall a single instance of Amnesty International weighing in on any particular legislative measure

of any stripe of government in the history of this province.

And again this is Saskatchewan, where we have this proud history of the first bill of rights in 1947 in Canadian jurisdictions, and the way that that has impacted the national affairs of this country. So you would think that given that history, and given the voice and certainly in the person of Alex Neve of Amnesty International coming forward to call on this Bill to be reconsidered, you'd think that would warrant some attention. And I guess I'll say this: that certainly caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, and has awakened me to the possible problems inherent in this amendment.

And again certainly other of my colleagues will have more to say on this matter. But as it stands, I think when somebody like Alex Neve and Amnesty International comes to the province, Mr. Speaker, and speaks out against this legislation, and in something that is so unheralded, so unprecedented in the history of this province — and given the history of this province — I think we owe it to the people that the human rights that we seek to defend and promote through this legislation, they deserve a better and closer look at this legislation. And we as legislators would do well to listen the voices of the Alex Neves.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know that other of my colleagues will be very interested to participate in this debate, and as such I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre 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: — 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 Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak about Bill 157, *An Act to amend The Oil and Gas Conservation Act*. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is a little thicker than some of the ones that we get around this place this year, and so practically it may take a little longer to actually review all of the issues that are set out in this legislation. But I think practically the legislation is set up to develop some compliance, assurance, and enforcement processes through setting up some new systems of measuring how oil and gas is produced and transferred within the province. And it's interesting to see how this is done. And I think perhaps this evening I'll have a chance to look at, in a little more detail, some of the fundamental issues, but I think at this point we should probably talk just a little bit about what is happening here.

It appears that the government and industry and various groups

have sat down and worked through a number of changes that will make things somewhat simpler for the industry. And I'm often reminded, Mr. Speaker, of some of the work that's happened in the North Sea as it relates to a lot of the oil and gas properties in the North Sea. And I think a number of years before we in Canada have looked at how one works together with industry, they made some very conscious decisions there to set up processes and procedures that would allow for the sharing of the information between Great Britain and Norway, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, any of the groups that were around the various oil deposits, and I think now including Russia which, and Finland, which have territories around on the north, northern part of some of those oil fields.

But one of the interesting points that always intrigued me was that they, by legislation in the various countries, ended up sharing their information as it related to the various layers, the substrata under the North Sea where the oil and gas were located, in such a manner that people were able, as the geologists and engineers who were working on the projects, it would enable them to have the ability to go and look at the structures in a virtual reality situation. And it's always interesting to think about virtual reality. Some of us only will see it maybe in some art works or places where people have used this, but what was enabled was for people to put on the headgear and the glasses that will allow them to go down and walk around or move around under the surface to see what these structures were.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are some aspects of this Bill today which include the sharing of information across our borders that may allow for some of that kind of work. I think we still have some major challenges around who owns the information and how that information is stored in our systems. But practically, this may end up having some aspects of providing this information for the oil companies, for the gas companies, for government, for various groups who are concerned about this, so that we can end up then having this shared information available for everyone who wishes to proceed.

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

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

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