



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
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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
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Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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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 member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all of my colleagues in the Assembly I'd like to welcome some very special guests from the Parkinson Society of Saskatchewan: President Floyd Manz, Else Manz, Colleen Crossman, Pat Duggleby, Kate Duggleby, Katrine McKenzie, Sandi Hewitt, Betty Lou Earl, Lindsey Olson, Warren Sharp, and Kevin Kirkness.

Mr. Speaker, these people are here to watch the proceedings in the member's statement today in recognition of April as Parkinson's Month. And I would like to thank them for being here and providing the inspiration for many of us who have Parkinson's. Thank you.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to add the opposition's welcome to the Parkinson Society to the legislature today and thank them for all the good work that they do supporting people with this disease.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast, the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce our victims services and volunteers and would request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for the opportunity, asked for leave to do an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members. This is Victims of Crime Awareness Week in Saskatchewan, and I would like to introduce seven victims services volunteers who are seated in your gallery. They are Fran Murray who in an earlier life sang with a band, Lady and the Gentleman; and also Elevera Fraser. They are from the Melfort office. This will also give — they are retiring as well — this will give Elevera a chance to spend more time with her two and a half year old great-grandson. So Elevera, if you want to give a wave, you and Fran would like to give a wave. These are people that look incredibly young for being retirees.

Bill Rustad is a volunteer and board member in northeast victims services; as well Carol Pederson, Dianne Smutt, Prudence McKenzie, and Tina Bird are also volunteers that are

here today. These are the dedicated volunteers who work out of the northeast, Parkland, Prince Albert, southeast, and southwest victims services programs. They are joined by Pat Thiele and Dwight Lawrence from victims services as well as Melvina Goulet, the northern program manager. They're also seated with Lindsay Rabyj and Sharon Hassard from Justice, communications.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to join our volunteers for lunch today to present each of them with a gift commemorating either their 10th or 15th anniversary as a volunteer victim support worker or board member. I appreciate and thank them for their commitment and ongoing support of victims of crime. We are grateful that people such as these are willing to expend their time and energy to help victims of crime as they navigate the justice system.

I would ask that all members join me in expressing our appreciation of the dedication of these individuals and all of the nearly 300 victim support workers and 100 board members for their years of voluntary service to people of their communities. This is a wonderful opportunity to thank people who have made a great deal of difference to their communities. We value them. We estimate that they spend in excess, on an annual basis, 11,000 hours to help thousands of victims of crime and tragedy.

We've had many of these volunteers over the years and would ask that all members join me in welcoming there to their Assembly and thanking them for their good work.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I want to join with the minister in welcoming the representatives of victims services in the Chamber today. You only have to visit once a family or community devastated by a particularly horrendous crime, as some of us have had the occasion to do in the past few years, to realize how important, how invaluable the services provided by victim services are, how irreplaceable they would be. In a day where we often bemoan the loss of community, these are people who are swimming up against the stream and helping their friends and neighbours in their community immeasurably, Mr. Speaker. So again, I would urge members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to welcome my constituency assistant, Kelly Merriman. Kelly's been with me since the — Kelly, you want to stand up and give a wave? — Kelly's been with me since the by-election, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure she'll be with me after the general election as well. She certainly does a good job running the office and keeps me organized, Mr. Speaker, and that's a job in and of itself. So I would ask my colleagues in the legislature to please welcome Kelly to her legislature.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 30 grade 12 students from F.W. Johnson Collegiate in my riding, Mr. Speaker. These are grade 12 students who are here to observe question period today and spend a few minutes here in their Assembly to observe the proceeding.

Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied by two teachers: one being Brian Merryweather, their teacher; and the second being the principal, Mr. Luc Lerminiaux, I guess, Mr. Speaker. French name; I just looked at it and, Mr. Speaker, wasn't quite sure how to say it. But, Mr. Speaker, I wish to welcome these students to their Assembly and hope that they have a wonderful time observing the proceedings today. And I'll have an opportunity to meet with you later on this afternoon. Take care.

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

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to all the members, I would like to introduce several people here in your gallery. Two are from my constituency. Ms. Sophie Foster, she's 90-something years young, has a mind like a steel trap, which is more than I can say for my seatmate. Anyway Sophie was a teacher for 29 years, and she taught at a one-room schoolhouse at the village which no longer exists called Louvain near Biggar. At that time when you boarded a teacher, you got \$15 off your taxes. So she has some interesting stories, and I'd like to welcome her to her Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, another constituent is here as well. His name is Tadesse Eyasu. Tadesse is now a Canadian citizen. He emigrated from Eritrea, and as you know, Eritrea was formed in '91 separating from Ethiopia. He also has some very interesting stories. He works at the university and has a cleaning business, works seven days a week and is sponsoring many of his family to come to Canada because Eritrea is not a democracy. They've closed the university. And he tells me that when you ask questions, you get shot. And he is very much enjoying Canada and the democratic process. And I would like us all please to make a special welcome to Tadesse.

Also while on my feet, Mr. Speaker, my CA [constituency assistant], Danielle Velazquez, is here. Danielle is a wonderful, wonderful woman, does an excellent job. And everybody that knows her loves her, and she's a good person. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce my constituency assistant, the CA for Saskatoon Silver Springs, Marilyn Kohuch. Marilyn is new to the office. She just undertook her responsibilities in the last couple of months. She's had a productive career at Great-West Life, some 17 years. I won't make any comments on my seatmate, other than the fact that he will probably want to be Health minister for 17 years as well. But to Marilyn, thank you for coming to your Legislative Assembly. To all members, please help me welcome Marilyn Kohuch to her Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents who have faced surging rent increases that are simply making life in Saskatchewan unaffordable. And, Mr. Speaker, the petition also speaks to a comparison between the city of Winnipeg and the cities of Regina and Saskatoon, that from 2007 to 2009 CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation] shows that there are fewer than 300 rental unit starts in Saskatchewan's two largest cities combined. And during that same period in Winnipeg, which has rent controls, Mr. Speaker, over 1,500 new rental units were built.

And it also highlights a paper that was produced out of Calgary School for Public Policy, increasing the affordability of rental housing in Saskatchewan, which calls for both incentives for building new rental properties and instituting rent controls. And the author says that "The greatest attraction of second-generation rent control is the protection it offers sitting tenants against the severe deterioration of housing affordability caused by high rent increases — in effect . . . economic eviction."

Mr. Speaker, and the prayer reads:

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

I so present.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition again from people who are concerned about maintaining quality health care services in the province.

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that the Government of Saskatchewan ought to recognize the need for timely access to comprehensive and quality health care services for all communities within the province, including Wakaw and surrounding areas, and that the disruption of emergency services and in-patient services at Wakaw Hospital will not serve the needs of the residents in this community and surrounding areas; and

That the cuts in access to timely and accurate diagnostic and laboratory tests within the community of Wakaw and surrounding areas will not serve the needs of the residents; and

That the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority budgetary reductions ought not to impede the provision of valuable, compassionate, and appropriate health care services to all citizens within the geographic boundary requiring acute

care, community and home care, long-term care, and public health care. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintain quality health care services through the commitment of necessary funding to address critical retention and recruitment issues.

And the signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from the citizens from Yellow Creek, Watrous, Tisdale, Humboldt, Cudworth, Saskatoon, and Wakaw. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of eliminating poverty in Saskatchewan. And we know that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations, and all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. And we know the income gap between the rich and poor continues to grow, and now one in five children in Saskatchewan live in deepening poverty, and citizens living in poverty have long identified affordable solutions. Recent national provincial initiatives include the Saskatoon health disparities report and the Canada Without Poverty Dignity for All campaign call for a comprehensive elimination of poverty strategy. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.

I do so present. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who live in the neighbourhood of Hampton Village in my constituency.

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 constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise yet again to read aloud a petition regarding restoring funding equity to Regina Catholic schools. Mr. Speaker, Regina Catholic schools receive \$275 less per pupil than Regina public schools, amounting to a funding inequity of \$2.7 million in total. The funding inequity replaces program delivery and staffing levels at risk.

[13:45]

The Government of Saskatchewan has denied Catholic school boards in the province representation on the government-appointed committee mandated to develop a long-term funding formula for Saskatchewan school boards. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to address the funding inequity between Regina Catholic schools and Regina public schools that provides \$275 less per pupil funding for Regina Catholic school students, totalling \$2.7 million, and make known that the continuation for another school year of funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at risk in Regina Catholic schools; and in so doing, immediately restore funding equity to ensure that every student in Saskatchewan, whether enrolled in a Catholic or a public school, receives equitable resources to ensure every student in Saskatchewan has access to a quality education.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the residents of Moose Jaw and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the detrimental affect on human rights law that the Bill 160 will have if enacted. And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request 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.

Today the petition is signed by residents of Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of their finances, our finances, by the Sask Party. They allude specifically to the fact that the Sask Party has run deficits and increased debt at a period of record highs in revenues, an increase of debt of over \$1.3 billion over the last three years and this year alone, with record highs in revenues, increasing debt to the tune of \$548 million, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that this comes at a consequence now and well into the future. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of White City, Tregarva, Grenfell, and Regina. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Remembering the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 9, 1917 the ground assault began at Vimy Ridge, a strategic 14-kilometre escarpment in France held by the German soldiers. In four days of fighting, 3,600 Canadian soldiers died, 5,000 were wounded, yet the battle was hailed as the first Allied success in the war.

Each and every year, Canadians celebrate April 9th as one of the most important military engagements in Canada's history, yet few Canadians recognize the unique importance of this event. Thankfully the Vimy Foundation has been actively working with Canada's youth to share the story of Vimy Ridge with a new generation of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward to the 100th anniversary of Vimy Ridge in 2017, I hope that more and more Canadians become engaged with our nation's history. Canada suffered 60,000 fatalities throughout the First World War. Mr. Speaker, our victory over the German forces at Vimy Ridge signalled the beginning of Canada's evolution as a sovereign nation. Mr. Speaker, in honour of that sacrifice made by our soldiers, the nation of France granted Canada 107 hectares of land at Vimy to build and maintain a memorial. It's imperative that Canada's youth preserve the memory of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, and the foundation will help ensure that happens.

On behalf of this House, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to those Canadians who fought at Vimy Ridge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Elphinstone-Centre.

World Men's Curling Championship

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate Team Canada on winning the Ford World Men's Curling Championship on Sunday night at the Brandt Centre here in Regina. Forty-seven-year-old Jeff Stoughton completed his most illustrious curling campaign by adding his second world title to a glittering list of accomplishments that includes three Brier wins and a record nine Manitoba titles.

Stoughton of Winnipeg's Charleswood Curling Club skipped his team of Jonathan Mead, Reid Carruthers and Steve Gould to a second world men's championship Sunday night with a thrilling 6-5 final victory over Scotland, the Scots ably skipped by Tom Brewster of Aberdeen. Sunday evening had a fantastic atmosphere as the teams performed in front of a final night crowd of 5,854 at the Brandt Centre. Total attendance for the nine-day event was 99,445.

Mr. Speaker, Regina knows how to put on an event, and this was no exception. Much of the success has to be attributed to the volunteers that sacrificed their time and effort for something they love very much. There were over 520 volunteers at the championship this week. There's no way you can put on an event like this without volunteer support.

The many volunteers helped with security, selling 50/50s, being hosts, providing transportation, working as bartenders, selling drink tickets, working on the ice, and cleaning up at the ice level. They are the true key to success. You need sponsors and ticket sales, but the volunteers are the heart and soul and add the warmth and hospitality to the event.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, we would like to congratulate Team Canada, the fans, and the volunteers on the World Men's Curling Championships, a tremendous success.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

National Parkinson's Disease Month

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the words of Michael J. Fox, and I quote, "People should know that scientists say of all the neurodegenerative diseases, Parkinson's is the closest to a cure in our lifetime." That's just one reason why April, and in particular April 11th, is of such importance to the Parkinson's community. Parkinson's disease affects the nervous system and causes people to have less control over their muscles.

Mr. Speaker, we should all be concerned about Parkinson's disease because it affects more of us than we think. Over 4,000 people in Saskatchewan have Parkinson's. At this time there is no known prevention from Parkinson's disease, and treatments only help to manage symptoms. There is no cure, but by raising awareness we can help raise funds for those searching for a cure and for urgently needed support programs.

Parkinson Society Saskatchewan has been the voice of Saskatchewan people living with Parkinson's since 1972. Its

purpose is to ease the burden and find a cure through education, support, research, and advocacy. Parkinson Society Saskatchewan touches every community across the province through its partnerships with nine support groups, health care professionals, research associations, and volunteers. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that everyone in this Assembly recognize April as National Parkinson's Disease Month and April 11th as International Parkinson's Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wolf Willow Cohousing

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently had the privilege of attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the newest housing project in Saskatoon Riversdale: Wolf Willow Cohousing located right on the boundary between the communities of King George and Riversdale. Mr. Speaker, Wolf Willow is about building community. It's a 21-unit condo development for those 55 and older with extensive common areas so neighbours can gather together when they choose.

Co-housing is a neighbourhood design that combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared resources and community living. And in keeping with the co-housing model that originated in Denmark about 50 years ago, the soon-to-be residents of Wolf Willow have actively participated in the planning. They have set their goal to create an old-fashioned neighbourhood that supports friendly co-operation, socializing, mutual support, and environmental responsibility.

In the words of one of the residents:

Cohousing is the answer for all "baby boomers" who don't want to live alone and want to "age in place" with kindred spirits. It is ecologically responsible, socially beneficial, and hard work, like all things worthwhile.

Another adds:

The workshops, the sauna, the exercise room, and the large common areas, both inside and outside, are only a few of the things I am looking forward to sharing with my new neighbours. How nice it will be to have an in-house movie night, or a communal dinner, or to make salsa and jam together in the big beautiful kitchen we are planning.

Mr. Speaker, construction will begin soon and the owners anticipate moving in in the spring of 2012. As someone who lives just a few blocks away, I could not be more thrilled to be gaining some great new neighbours. With that I just want to say, welcome to the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

World Men's Curling Championship

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand in this Assembly today and recognize the Jeff Stoughton rink for their great performances all week, which culminated with a world title on Sunday.

Stoughton, along with third Jonathan Mead, second Reid Carruthers, lead Steve Gould, alternate Garth Smith, and coach Norm Gould were the class of the field during the round robin, finishing with only one loss.

In the 1-2 page playoff game, the Stoughton rink defeated Scotland 5 to 2, and the two teams met again in the final, their third meeting of the week. Our Canadian team was down early in the championship game, but they remained confident. In the 8th end, Stoughton scored 2 points with the hammer to assume a 6 to 4 lead, and it seemed clear that his powerhouse team would not relinquish the advantage.

One of the highlights for the crowd was in the 7th end. Mr. Speaker, Stoughton performed his patented spinarama, executing a 360-degree turn out of the hack before firing the rock through the house to blank the end. The manoeuvre brought down the house. "That was pretty cool," the smiling Stoughton said of the spinarama.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I would like to congratulate Team Stoughton on their world championship title. I would also like to commend the thousands of volunteers and the organizing committee for putting on another successful world-class sporting event in Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Taste of Culture

Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer congratulations to the organizers and participants who coordinated and carried off the highly successful 4th annual Taste of Culture in The Battlefords.

This multicultural event highlights the food, music, and culture of the diverse community that exists in and around The Battlefords, and at the same time increases public awareness, community involvement, and cultural literacy in The Battlefords. The event was organized by The Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre, coordinated by gateway program manager Jennifer Niesink. It attracted vendors featuring food from China, Denmark, France, Italy, Korea, The Philippines, Norway, South Africa, Ukraine, Saskatchewan First Nations, and Saskatchewan's early settlers.

The dance and music program featured First Nations drummers, the high school jazz band, square dancers, Highland dancers, Ukrainian dancers, the Meota Hobby Band, a First Nations Michael Jackson impersonator, a Ruthenian children's group, and an elementary school jazz band.

The Battlefords immigration and multicultural community is growing. The Taste of Culture event is growing. This is all good news for the region.

I call on all members to join me in congratulating The Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre for their hard work on this important event and on their daily endeavours helping newcomers to our community settle appropriately and adequately. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Wascana Plains.

Increased Business Optimism in Saskatchewan

Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Spring has sprung in Saskatchewan, and with that there are certain trends we can see. One such trend is for a fourth consecutive year the Government of Saskatchewan has tabled a balanced budget.

There is another growing trend: our businesses are becoming more confident. The opposition members may feel a little down, Mr. Speaker, but the barometer of business optimism in Saskatchewan jumped up significantly in March to a nation-leading 75.2 points. In Saskatchewan the 75.2 barometer rating in March represented a 4.6 per cent, point, increase from February.

Mr. Speaker, tax cuts announced in the recent provincial budget, the general good state of the economy, and high prices for agricultural and resource products produced in Saskatchewan were mentioned as explanation for the increased optimism. “We have a number of things going our way,” said Marilyn Braun-Pollon, the vice-president of Saskatchewan agribusiness with the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business].

In addition to being rated high on the overall business barometer rating, Saskatchewan business owners were optimistic in answers to several specific questions. For example, 51 per cent of those surveyed in Saskatchewan said the overall state of business is good compared with only 38 per cent nationally. Thirty per cent of Saskatchewan businesses said they plan to increase full-time employment in the next three to four months.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there is more work to do for sure, but it is nice to see that business confidence in our province continues to grow, and more and more people are realizing that our province is the place to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Pension Plans and Arrangements for Office Space

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, using public pension funds for a private sector investment does put the pension funds at an increased level of risk. To the Minister of Government Services: does this government believe the province’s hard-working employees and their pension fund should be used as pawns in the world of private high-stakes real estate?

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the pension industry over the last number of years has faced some predicaments. We know across Canada a number of pension plans have had the need to review

and to determine whether or not they’re still in a soluble situation, Mr. Speaker. There have been many changes to pension plans. So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of whether or not the government will be making some additional changes to the pension plan, that’s for further discussion. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Not even close, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, we know that this government is committed to rent 50 to 60,000 square feet of office space at the highest rates in the province. Now we find out that the pension fund of Saskatchewan employees is being used to finance the project. So government employees will be working in the building and their pension fund will be financing it.

My question is for the minister: if public money is part of this deal, why won’t the government be transparent and release the details?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I believe the member’s asking about the Saskatchewan Pension Plan based in Kindersley, and the SPP [Saskatchewan Pension Plan] plan that exists. You know, if the question is related to that plan, Mr. Speaker, we’ve seen some tremendous changes in that plan in the last number of months. We looked at the plan, and the recommendation from the board of directors was that we enhance the \$600 contribution to \$2,500. There was discussion with the federal government, and indeed the changes were permitted by the federal government. We’ve enacted those changes.

And, Mr. Speaker, that change occurred just at the end of the calendar year 2010. And we saw tremendous uptake in terms of the pension plan. Many people took advantage of enhancing their contribution from 600 to 2,500.

It’s a very good plan, Mr. Speaker. As the discussion occurs across Canada for whether or not there should be a pooled plan, you know, one of the best kept secrets is the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. Because it’s one of the best in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, this is even more worrisome if the minister isn’t even on the right page. We’re talking about the 50 to 60,000 square feet that this government has committed to lease for over 20 years in the new office tower in downtown Regina, financed by employee pension plans’ funds, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, what Saskatchewan people want is this government to deal with these issues today and into the future.

And this government has claimed time and time again that the private sector is best when it’s left to its own devices, and they’re not going to be picking winners and losers. But here’s a private building that wouldn’t go ahead if it wasn’t for a

guaranteed government lease, if it wasn't for the Saskatchewan employees' pension money financing the project, and if it wasn't for provincial tax incentives that this government initiated. So, Mr. Speaker, what happened to this government's claim that the private sector is best when left to its own devices, and why is this government saying one thing and doing something totally opposite?

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

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just stated here's a situation where you have a government saying one thing and doing the opposite. We have a member opposite who in fact stated one thing and did the opposite. We had a case where the NDP [New Democratic Party] was saying one thing, such as they would never sign a 20-year lease, and the NDP signed a 20-year lease for the Meadow Lake Provincial Office Building in February 2003.

The NDP sits there, criticizes this government for entering into leases, and yet they did the same thing. No matter how the NDP try to spin it, Mr. Speaker, it boils down to this — the NDP saying one thing, doing another.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the minister is still smiling because I'd like her to know that the NDP caucus has introduced a private member's Bill that will make all contracts and leases the government enters into available to the members of the Legislative Assembly for scrutiny. This will ensure that guaranteed leases such as the one on this downtown tower, tax credits for private sector jobs, and the financing by public employees pension plan would not be hidden from Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister do what is right for Saskatchewan people and ensure the details of government contracts can no longer be hidden? Will she change her current policy or support our legislation?

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

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it a little ironic that the member opposite is bringing forward a private member's Bill when over 11 occasions when she was the minister of SPMC [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation], she refused information for public disclosure. So for her to state that is a little ironic.

Mr. Speaker, this office building, it's about the Saskatchewan moving forward. It's about building new buildings. It's about moving head offices here. It's about new employment. It's about high-level employment, Mr. Speaker. I don't know about you, but I know that I like this new Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan that's moving forward, where people are moving here, looking for jobs here, and acquiring employment here — not when they packed up and moved away under the old NDP.

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

Ms. Higgins: — This government ran, and you can look it up in their election platform, to be the most transparent and accountable government ever. But, Mr. Speaker, we have yet, we have yet to see any evidence of that. In fact it is harder to get information. Mr. Speaker, the public expects higher transparency from public officials and from governments. Mr. Speaker, will the minister change her policy and release the details or will she support the private member's legislation?

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

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, that you don't just change things on the fly. In fact you do things . . . Everything is done through consultation. Mr. Speaker, I'm more than pleased to meet with the industry to discuss whether information should be released. The government leases a substantial amount of property throughout the province. At the present time, for us to release that kind of information would skew the marketplace. So for the member opposite to state that they would come forward with a private member's Bill . . . And who did they consult? Did they consult the industry? Did they consult anyone who would have an interest in this? I don't think so. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Treatment for Multiple Sclerosis

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-five hundred Saskatchewan people are living with multiple sclerosis. In fact Saskatchewan has the highest rate of MS [multiple sclerosis] in the country. Many Saskatchewan people living with MS are paying out of their own pockets to go out of country to get the liberation therapy.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is he putting together a database to track the people that have gone out of the province to get the liberation therapy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of course we understand the devastating effect that multiple sclerosis has on people across Canada, but no more than they do here in Saskatchewan with the very high prevalence rate, Mr. Speaker. That's why our government has moved forward as a leader in Canada, Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of our Premier, Mr. Speaker, the first province to say that we are going to fund clinical trials in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there has been one other province that's looked at setting up a registry. No other provinces have moved in this area. It has been one that we've looked at and debated. Part of the problem is, Mr. Speaker, if you set up a registry, you're not guaranteed that you're going to have input from all people that receive the treatment. In fact what is generally seen is that people that have the liberation treatment overseas tend to

register if it's been a good result, and people that tend not to have good results don't register. And I don't know, Mr. Speaker, how valuable that will be to the research. Clinical trials will be conducted here in Canada under the leadership of this government.

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

Ms. Junor: — So for the people, Mr. Speaker, who have gone out of the province to have the treatment, the minister is saying they're going to do nothing, not even any contact. After the therapy is done, it's important that the patient gets rehab assistance and follow-up treatment to assure that the vein doesn't collapse again.

Mr. Speaker, Terri Sleeva who's with us today went to Mexico in January to get the liberation therapy. She is experiencing more movement in her hands and feet and more circulation throughout her body. Terri tells us that she is able to stand for an hour or more a day.

When Terri got back from Mexico, she called the Wascana Rehab Centre to book follow-up rehab. It's been almost three months, and Terri is still waiting for an appointment.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: since the government has sent out a call for proposals to conduct research trials in Saskatchewan, what is the minister going to do to assure that people who get the liberation treatment outside of Saskatchewan get the proper follow-up care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly realize that a number of people go out of this province, out of the country, go overseas and have the liberation treatment. And when they come back, Mr. Speaker, we would expect that all of our health care professionals would supply the appropriate care, Mr. Speaker. I have talked to the College of Physicians and Surgeons as well as the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association] on this very issue. They are of the same mindset, that when a person comes back into Saskatchewan, regardless of where they've been in the country, regardless of what treatment they've received overseas, that they receive the appropriate care here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very curious where the opposition stands on the whole piece around clinical trials here in Saskatchewan. They've had nothing positive to say, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that member opposite, in her prelude to the question, could she please tell us where that party stands on the treatment or on the clinical trials here in Saskatchewan?

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, that's simply not true. I have never said anything that wasn't positive. The questions I'm asking today are the questions that the people who are in the gallery with us today are asking, and they want to hear answers. They don't want to hear political spin and accusations from that minister.

And, Mr. Speaker, those MS patients who are in the gallery and the many thousands who are out in the province have a number of questions around the MS trials that will be taking place. The deadline for proposals is April 26th of this year, and MS patients have no idea who'll be allowed to participate in the trials or when the trials will actually start.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will MS patients who have gone out of the country to get the liberation therapy be included in the trials, and how is he going to know who to invite to participate if he has nothing in place to track who has had the liberation therapy?

The Speaker: — I just want remind our guests, you're more than welcome to join us in the gallery, but I'd ask that our guests not participate in the debate in any form. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the clinical trials . . . The money has been granted to the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation that will be conducting the clinical trials through research proposals, Mr. Speaker, and we'll let them do their work.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just said that they've been nothing but positive. Let me quote the Leader of the Opposition on August 5th, 2010, when he spoke on the radio, and this is what he said. The Opposition Leader said, "Premier Wall is blowing smoke and possibly giving false hope to those suffering from MS," Mr. Speaker. That's where the opposition stands, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to accuse the Premier of playing scientist, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, would the opposition say one thing . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Telling the truth. This is exactly what that member's leader said on the CKRM, Mr. Speaker, that it was creating false hope. That's where your leader stands, Mr. Speaker. If the rest of you stand somewhere else, please stand here and tell us.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this minister does a disservice to all the people in this province . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview. I would ask the member to start over so we can hear the question.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister does all the people in this province a disservice when he says no one can ask him a question, no one can bring a concern up, or they'll be smacked down as being negative. He accused me of not being his cheerleader in estimates last week and whining about never having anything positive. That is not the job of the opposition. People sitting in the audience, people watching from home, people coming to our offices, phoning us, they want questions asked and they want answers.

Mr. Speaker, if this minister ever took the time to actually

answer a question, then he perhaps wouldn't feel as if he's so out of touch and have to go back to the 16 years and drag in Lewis Draper as his only ammunition in this House.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this government stands behind our commitment of \$5 million towards MS clinical trials, the first in Canada, Mr. Speaker. That's where this government stands. In fact, Mr. Speaker, not only have we led the way; now the NDP government in Manitoba at least is saying where they stand and putting \$5 million into clinical trials.

I'm not going to go back 16 years and quote what other people have said in the NDP. I just have to go back to August 5th, 2010, when the Opposition Leader accuses the Premier, oh now he's playing, now he's a scientist and he's going to solve MS. You want to talk about not helping the debate in MS. It's in quotes from the Opposition Leader, Mr. Speaker.

This government is standing behind clinical trials, and we hope that someday we can help find a cure for such a terrible disease.

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

[14:15]

Reporting Political Donations

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Section 250 of *The Election Act* provides that amounts received for membership fees or dues are deemed to be contributions. Section 229 of *The Election Act* provides that the fiscal year of a registered political party is the calendar year.

To the minister: it has become apparent that Enterprise Club donations are not disclosed in the annual report for the Saskatchewan Party for the fiscal year in which they are received. Will the Minister of Justice co-operate with the Chief Electoral Officer in an investigation of whether there has been proper disclosure of political donations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, if the Chief Electoral Officer wishes to review any aspect of any election return filed by this government or this party, we will absolutely comply and give every bit of assistance that we possibly can. Mr. Speaker, that has always been the position of the members on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member opposite, and I can advise the members that there is provisions of the Act that appear to have some inconsistencies. The Chief Electoral Officer has given out what may be, amount to an interpretation bulletin so that you have some things where monies are paid by individuals. They will be made up of different parts. Part will go for meals and part will go for membership fees, part will go . . . And you cannot do those, you cannot do an apportionment until after you've gone far enough into the year that you can see

what those expenses are.

Mr. Speaker, that appears to have been satisfactory with the Chief Electoral Officer in the past. If it's not in the future, we will certainly have discussions with the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure that this party will absolutely fully and completely comply at all times, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have heard the minister say outside this Chamber that there is an interpretation, by Sask Party lawyers perhaps, that gives them some comfort that they can deduct fundraising activities and expenses from contributions and then claim them in a different fiscal year than they were donated, Mr. Speaker. But that is not how the Act reads.

And if he is now saying in the Chamber to members here that there is an interpretation been provided to the Saskatchewan Party and that the Minister of Justice has a copy of it that says otherwise from the Chief Electoral Officer, will he table it in the Chamber?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we will provide all information that we have. We have no problem providing information. When you pay money to a political party that goes to different purposes — part of it is by way of a contribution, part of it is by way of a membership, part of it is by way of a banquet and other tickets — you have to get far enough into the year that you can properly allocate those things. Mr. Speaker, it would be wrong to do something where you would file or give a receipt that would not be complete or accurate or would exceed the amount that's eligible for the receipt.

Mr. Speaker, we work with the Chief Electoral Officer. We have questions; we put them to the Chief Electoral Officer. And, Mr. Speaker, I guarantee you that in every year that there has been questions, we have resolved them to the satisfaction of the Chief Electoral Officer and we will in fact continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of Justice can correct me if I'm wrong, but I asked him if he would table a copy of this interpretation that he spoke of in the Chamber that he has received from the Chief Electoral Officer or that's in his possession, if he would table it. I take it his answer was yes, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to seeing it this week.

The minister has also said, minister has also said that he would provide any co-operation that the Chief Electoral Officer wants. Can the minister advise that the Chief Electoral Officer has already requested legal assistance, legal resources from the Minister of Justice, and has he denied or provided them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the Chief Electoral Officer. He has a very busy year. He's going to be conducting an election later this year. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, that election may well change the seating position in this House and possibly in a very good way, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we do not intend to stand in the way of that process.

If the Chief Electoral Officer feels it is necessary to conduct other investigations during this year, we will ensure that adequate resources are supplied, Mr. Speaker. The resources for the chief electoral . . . as the member is well aware, are provided by the Board of Internal Economy and, Mr. Speaker, I'm unaware of any requests for other investigative costs.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government is going to continue to support the good work done by the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure that they are able to conduct an election in a proper, satisfactory, and complete manner this year. Mr. Speaker, the people on this side of the House will co-operate and do whatever is necessary or whatever is requested from the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Speaker.

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

Planned Highway Improvements

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. In Estevan and the surrounding area, they've been calling for the twinning of No. Highway 39 for some time now. It's a safety issue. It's a managing growth issue. Why were the needs relating to twinning Highway 39, expressed by the people of Estevan, ignored in this year's provincial budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government has repeatedly stated that our twinning priorities are finishing the project, No. 11 from Saskatoon to Prince Albert. As that nears completion at an accelerated schedule, Mr. Speaker — it will be completed well ahead of when the members opposite announced it; it will be completed in the 2012 construction year — as that nears completion, we will, with the most current data at that time, be re-evaluating what the next twinning project and/or passing lane program should be at that time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister talks about when the work is done, they will re-evaluate the dollars for twinning, Mr. Speaker. But in a year-end interview with *The Estevan Mercury*, the member from Estevan is quoted as saying that she has met with the Minister of Highways who assured her that Highway 39 is next on the priority list after the twinning of Highway 11. This is reported in *The Estevan Mercury*.

My question to the Minister of Highways therefore is simple: has he in fact assured the member from Estevan that this information is correct, that it is the next priority, and has he communicated this officially to the community leadership in the city of Estevan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I just indicated, as Highway 11 as a project is nearing completion, we'll be re-evaluating where the next major capital projects go. Mr. Speaker, this could be a twinning program or this could be a combination of twinning and passing lane program, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of extremely busy highways all over the province which are a result of the growth agenda of this province, Mr. Speaker. And as those, as the project on Highway 11 advances, we'll start making those decisions.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made highways a priority. During the election campaign, we committed to spending \$1.8 billion on highways over a four-year term. Mr. Speaker, with this budget year we will far exceed that commitment. We will have spent \$2.2 billion over the four-year term, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that this is the highest spending budget in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We are not surprised that some of that money would find its way into highways, Mr. Speaker. The minister . . . The member from Estevan is quoted in *The Estevan Mercury* in January the 5th, the year-end interview, and this is her direct quote, Mr. Speaker, "The minister has assured me that as soon as the twinning of Highway 11 north of Saskatoon is completed, Estevan's highway is on the priority list." So, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Highways today telling us something different in the Chamber and is he communicating something different to the community leadership in Estevan than he's providing to members of his own caucus, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, there is a number of heavily trafficked highways around the province that'll be reviewed as far as potential for twinning and/or a passing lane program: Highway 16 east of Saskatoon for example, Highway 7 west of Saskatoon, and the highways that the member opposite's referring to, 6 and 39 south of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, this government has made spending on highways a significant priority. Our capital budget this year, Mr. Speaker, will be \$100 million in excess of the last budget year of the members opposite, which for some reason was substantially higher than any of the previous years.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this government makes highways a priority, unlike the members opposite who reverted highways to gravel or, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was in cabinet, told people to go fill their own potholes, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answer to questions 1,010 to 1,029.

The Speaker: — Questions 1,010 through 1,029 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 169 — *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*. Mr. Speaker, *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011* will merge the functions performed by the consumer protection branch with those carried out by the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission or what is known as SFSC.

Under this legislation, the programming and staff of the consumer protection branch or CPB will be transferred to the SFSC. The fee revenues and related expenditures of the consumer protection branch will be handled through the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Fund. Reference to this transition is made at page 109 of the budget Estimates document.

Mr. Speaker, consumer protection is an important responsibility in modern society. Consumer protection involves providing rights and guarantees to consumers in their dealings with businesses, regulating businesses and industries that interact with consumers.

The consumer protection branch and the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission share many of the same objectives. Both SFSC and CPB focus on protecting consumers from unlawful and unscrupulous practices in the marketplace, whether these occur in the financial services sector or in the general marketplace. A greater critical mass and strategic focus can be achieved by collocating consumer protection programming under one regulatory authority. This will increase efficiencies and opportunities for co-operation that will be missed if they remain as separate units. This is consistent with the goals stated in the budget of improving public services and lowering debt within the context of a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, consumer protection programming will benefit from the SFSC's regulatory expertise and strategic focus in areas such as consumer education. Consumer education is an important area for the SFSC as the commission seeks to ensure that consumers identify and avoid financial scams and frauds and that they have information they need to make informed decisions about financial products and services. Education is a significant component of consumer protection. It is all related, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the amendments themselves, *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act* was passed in 2002 to bring

a new structure to the administration of financial services programs. It created a commission of independent members appointed by government, firstly, to oversee the operation of the regulatory functions; second, to act as a sounding board; and third, to conduct hearings relating to certain regulatory functions. The new legislation adds references to consumer protection and consumer protection legislation to the mandate of the commission throughout.

In 2009 a fund was created that authorizes the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission to retain revenue from its operations for the purpose of funding its statutory operations. Revenue is generated primarily by fees charged to the regulated entities and is deposited in the SFSC fund. The amendments will have the same effect respecting the operation of the consumer protection branch and its functions.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation will have a new part, specifically setting out the powers and responsibilities of the commission respecting the consumer protection function. This will highlight the importance of consumer protection in our province and create clarity concerning the activities for which the commission is responsible.

Since the needs of consumers and the consumer protection function are continually evolving, if new consumer protection legislation is created in the future, the function can be assigned to the commission by regulations. The regulations will also allow new consumer protection regulators to come under the umbrella of the commission. Mr. Speaker, in light of the importance of consumer protection to society, this legislation will emphasize the government's focus on and involvement with consumer protection initiatives of all kinds.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to now move second reading of *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act, 2011*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 169, *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and add comments to the debate on Bill No. 169, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act*.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of areas that the minister touched on, but I guess generally overall what it looks like is that there is a reorganization happening and a movement of staff and services. Mr. Speaker, and it seems to follow along with some changes that were made previously, I think, almost a year ago. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, what happens is, I guess the big question is, will there be sufficient funding for the organization to operate and to offer the services that citizens expect?

And I guess there's also a question too, Mr. Speaker, about the shuffling staff outside of what we would view as government proper and the accounting of the government's commitment a

couple of years ago to reduce the amount of civil service, 4 per cent of each of the four years of their term.

Mr. Speaker, and what we've seen in other areas is quite clearly that while there may not be a reduction in staff, there is a reduction in numbers. And what has happened is that organizations have been moved outside of the body of government into outside organizations. So, Mr. Speaker, if the government is still funding these operations, if they are funded by tax dollars and public resources, just because they are outside the area of government proper and not counted on the FTEs [full-time equivalent] in the Public Service Commission, the government may be believing that they aren't counted and that therefore they will be able to talk about meeting their commitment.

And, Mr. Speaker, they actually haven't streamlined, or they haven't reduced, or they haven't really changed many things. They have just shuffled them. So out of sight, out of mind seems to be the way this government operates. So we're wondering if this is going to be just another one of those. And again, the question of whether there will be sufficient funding for the responsibilities of this organization to carry on.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a section that talks about a revolving fund, the use of funds:

The commission may use moneys in the fund for the following purposes:

(a) paying the labour, supervisory and administrative costs associated with the following:

The first one:

... the exercise of any of the powers of a financial services regulator pursuant to any financial services legislation that are assigned to the commission by the regulations;

(ii) the exercise of any powers given to the commission by this Act, the regulations and any financial services legislation.

And three, they may use the fund for:

(iv) the doing of any other thing ... that ... [the commission] considers necessary and in the public interest to perform ... [its] responsibilities.

And also "paying the expenses of administering the fund" and "any other purpose prescribed in the regulations".

So, Mr. Speaker, with the set-up of a revolving fund and the ability for the commission to use the fund, use of funds, for a variety of areas and also it looks like pay expenses and what's needed through the organization. Here again, it looks like we may be moving all of ... any fees that are collected may be put into the fund. And this will avoid showing any fees, and I'm not sure about fee increases, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of questions. The minister quite quickly flipped through his remarks. It wasn't very

fulsome. And, Mr. Speaker, I know there are a number of my colleagues that are interested in this piece of legislation and the extent of the explanations that are provided in the explanatory notes attached to the changes of the Bill and, Mr. Speaker, I know we need to go through this in more detail and give it some thought. And I know there are other colleagues that are looking forward to having an opportunity to voice their comments on the Act, so at this time I would adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 169. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 167

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 167 — *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me to have the privilege to enter into this debate in this fine Assembly and to do so on behalf of the good folks of Regina Northeast.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill that's being debated here today is the Bill 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*. And although, Mr. Speaker, it is what is normally known as a short Bill — it only has three clauses to the Bill — it's rather I think quite an important Bill when you look at the, first of all of course, the importance of agriculture and grain and oil seed production in this province and how long and great a history it has and what a significant role it has played over the years. And it still does in our economy, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that over time as the times change and things change, and we hope that those changes are always progressive changes and positive changes ... And I think the same could be said to the movement of grain production from the Prairies here over the years. And of course this will date me, Mr. Speaker, but I'm willing to run that risk. I can remember back in the days when the only rail transportation for grain was done by wooden boxcars, and that was the norm. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, that was probably the norm for a lot of years.

And of course we enjoyed at that time ... The area I came from originally was a community of about every 5 or 7 miles along the rail line, and each one of these communities would be fortified with five or seven different grain companies buying grain from the local producers. And this grain of course would be purchased and shipped for export purposes, and it would be

done so primarily with the use of wooden boxcars. And at one time, Mr. Speaker, that was a state of the art equipment. That was the latest thing going, and it served the times quite well.

But as time progresses, things changed and probably with good reason, Mr. Speaker, because I can remember the extra work the individuals and managers of the grain companies, grain elevators in these towns would have to go through in order to fill a boxcar. In those days, Mr. Speaker, the boxcars had two large openings, one on either side, for the purpose of emptying the grain but also for the purposes of filling it. And in order to block off these doors, there was items called grain doors, which was a common term used, and they were actually double-ply lumber that was used to fill the gap in the grain cars. And thusly then they're going to be filled overtop to the maximum capacity that the boxcar could carry. And that served, Mr. Speaker, quite well as the agriculture demands of the day.

But as technology changed, and it changed within the agricultural industry, and it created I think greater production and therefore greater demand for improved efficiencies within our grain system to be able to move grain stocks from A, the farm, from the farm gate to the export positions in our ports. And that was sped along I think by the demand from importing countries who demanded quicker and more efficient and more timely delivery of their products. And this all ties in I think with the changes within, the technical changes within the food industry, and it certainly has an effect right down to the producer level. So with that, Mr. Speaker, there came a realization that the traditional wooden boxcar was no longer fitting the bill and serving the needs of not only the farmers, Mr. Speaker, and not only the grain companies but serving the needs of exporters and those countries who imported our grain. The efficiency wasn't there, and the system had to be revisited for efficiency purposes.

Now part of that, Mr. Speaker, resulted in a debate over the statute that protected freight rate prices that were being charged to producers for the cost or the purpose of moving grain to export positions. And there was a statute in place that protected the, limited the ability of grain companies to charge excessive amounts to grain companies and thusly to farmers for the movement of their product to an export position. And I believe the term was the Crow rate, Mr. Speaker.

And I can remember back when there was a significant debate held in not only in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, but really right across the province over the future of the Crow rate and the desire by the federal government of the day as well as a desire by the grain companies to, and railroad companies to have the Crow rate removed and the restriction or cap on the charges removed so that they could increase the charges to the producer for the movement of grain, and they would suggest then that that would provide them the ability, the financial ability to be able to modernize the grain car fleet.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we did lose the Crow rate, which cost the farmers in this great province hundreds of millions of dollars. At the same time it did not, it did not cause the grain companies to make significant investments into rolling stock for the purposes of transportation of grain.

So the government of the day, and this is back in the '80s I

believe, Mr. Speaker, probably I think it was in the mid-'80s — or perhaps early '80s; maybe late '70s, early '80s — the government, provincial government along with the government in Alberta and I think with the Canadian Wheat Board sort of joined forces and made a significant investment into the purchase of modern grain hopper cars that would fill the bill as far as being able to meet the needs of the grain companies and the needs of the exporters to be able to provide adequate product at the port of export in a timely fashion in order to make the contract to meet the needs of international marketplace and international buyers.

And I believe that by that time, by that point in our history the Canadian Wheat Board could very easily point to a lot of contracts that they lost, simply lost them because they were unable to fill them because they were unable to get the product to an export position in a timely fashion that would meet the needs of the importers, whereas other countries were stepping up to the plate and filling that void and filling that need.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was a need to certainly make an investment into those rolling stocks that would provide the ability to move the product from the farm gate to export position in a timely fashion, in an efficient way, and so that we would be able to continue our . . . maintaining our international commitments, be able to maintain our reputation internationally for being a country who was able to provide the stocks and products necessary to fulfill the contracts the various countries certainly demanded as a result of certainly changing times and modernizing of the transportation system in a number of fields as well as the field of agriculture and the movement of grain products.

That, Mr. Speaker, then led to a need to take taxpayers' dollars, whether they be provincial taxpayer dollars, federal taxpayer dollars, and producers' dollars through the Canadian Wheat Board, to purchase these rolling stocks in order to provide the adequate supply of cars to be able to move the stocks of grain that were being produced in this great province of ours to export position. And those stocks of grains, I think as a result of technology and as a result of changes to agricultural practices, were actually increasing. I think you look to that period of time, you've also seen that the practices that farmers used on their farm land, the practices as far as production of grain and oilseeds is concerned, certainly changed. And we've seen an increase in the production per acre of those products across the province here.

[14:45]

Now as the world of agriculture has changed, so has the products being produced on the farm changed. I can remember as a young fellow on the farm with my father that the basic crops being produced was, you know, the three. The big three primarily was wheat, barley, and canola. And canola was introduced to the farming community in Saskatchewan here probably in the late '50s and early '60s. Up till that time, it was oats, wheat, and barley was the mainstay. And that was certainly the mainstay for many a year.

But when, within probably a decade and a half ago to two decades ago, there was introduction of more exotic products that were certainly capable of growing in this province along

... And I've got to give credit to and take some time to give credit to the agriculture scientists who developed various strains of different products that would be able to be produced in this climate conditions that we enjoy here in Saskatchewan.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, compared to many other provinces or countries in the world, we have a shorter growing season, and therefore a lot of the crops that were produced in other countries simply at that time wouldn't be able to be produced here in Saskatchewan. But through a lot of hard work and certainly ... [inaudible] ... by scientists and crop specialists, we were able to ... They were able to develop strains of these various commodities that are able to be grown here in Saskatchewan, and to be done so in a very efficient and effective manner.

So that then, Mr. Speaker, added to the crop mix. No longer was it just the big three. No longer was it just wheat, oats, and barley and with some canola, as now there was other commodities — peas and lentils and so on and so forth — that was added to the mix, which even put greater strain on the need to be able to move the product to marketplace, put greater strain on our transportation system.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, there was a need to ensure that there was adequate rolling stock to be able to meet the demands of the grain industry internationally, the importers internationally, who were looking at the ability to have access to a good supply of product, but needed that product to be delivered to the ports, thus loaded on the ships, and delivered to their facilities in a timely fashion.

And to do that, Mr. Speaker, you have to ensure that the grain handling system, the transportation system works as efficiently and as effectively as possible. And to assist in doing this, the individuals — whether they be through the tax dollars here in Saskatchewan or in Alberta or through the producers through their dollars through the Canadian Wheat Board — certainly made that investment in the grain cars that were required to be able to efficiently and effectively move the product from the elevator system into the export system.

That, Mr. Speaker, now we've seen it carried to actually one step further. As I said earlier, that as a youngster I remember the communities in which I grew up in enjoyed the ability of having four or five grain companies in each community and each community being, you know, five or seven miles apart. And that has certainly changed, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen a rationalization, I guess you would say, of the grain-handling industry in rural Saskatchewan where we've seen the little country elevator, which used to be a symbol of Saskatchewan, you've seen that little country elevator now disappear. Many communities simply don't have one anymore, and they have been replaced with large inland grain terminals located at great distances from these communities.

So as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, certainly there's an efficiency as far as the grain handling is concerned, having much larger volumes of grain collected at one particular hub, and cars, a large number of cars that can be located at that facility. And in quite quick order, something like 24 or 48 hours, you can have 100 cars loaded and ready for export position, and those 100 cars can make their way straight to the

export position because they're all loaded with basically the same commodity. And it certainly does provide efficiencies within the system as far as the grain handling is concerned and the ability to get a like product to export positions.

But like in anything else, Mr. Speaker, there's probably a dark side to it. Initially the dark side is that in many of these smaller communities are disappearing simply because one of the mainstays, which was the elevator system, has now been lost. Certainly a large ... To the community itself a large tax base has been lost, and thus for the communities now finding themselves more difficult to be able to survive with the loss of that revenue. As well as, Mr. Speaker, I think we're seeing increased pressure on our highway system, increased pressure on our road system because of the larger volumes, larger trucks now, larger volumes being shipped greater distances to the grain inland terminal, putting greater pressure on our transportation system, primarily in this province, our road system and our highway system.

So there are some dark sides to it, Mr. Speaker, but I suppose that's true of any time there's progress or any time there's change in an industry of any type. There is sort of all the winners and losers, and there's always going to be some negative fallout from it. But, Mr. Speaker, the idea of the Grain Car Corporation was to provide that rolling stock that was essential to be able to provide the transportation system, an efficient and effective transportation system that would move our product from the farm gate to export position.

And I think you're seeing — certainly the technology has changed — but I think you're seeing with those changes and the introduction of the grain cars through a grain car corporation such as the one we're debating here today, certainly supported the agricultural industry in Saskatchewan and supported their ability to maintain markets abroad by being able to provide quality product in a timely fashion in export positions so that those international purchasers were able to maintain their flow.

And I think whenever you look at manufacturing industry of any type and food products ... Well maybe we don't like to look at it that way. It certainly is a product that is manufactured and handled as a manufacturing product, that it is often the term just in time is applied because a lot of the manufacturing industry depends on a proper delivery of raw product to their facilities in a timely fashion. They depend upon that so that they are able to reduce their storage capacity, able to reduce their costs that they require in maintaining a certain level of storage just to ensure that they have a product on hand at all times. If they can line it up properly — and we're seeing that as sort of a modern approach to a lot of the capital costs and efficiencies that are being developed within the manufacturing system — the just in time system allows that product to be delivered to the manufacturer just in time for it to be processed.

And that, Mr. Speaker, certainly I think applies to the product of agriculture. I think you are seeing that a lot of importing countries who import the raw product from Canada here, from Saskatchewan through Canada, do so. And they have their deliveries timed, timed in a way so that they are able to take that product right from the delivery ship and process it right into their processing system, and to do so without having a significant investment in storage facilities to ensure that they

have that product on hand.

So, Mr. Speaker, it becomes then even more important to the importing countries to have a reliable system that they can rely on having that product delivered. So that when they sign a contract with Canada that they're going to purchase X number of tonnes of, say, no. 2 red wheat, that they know that Canada will deliver that in a timely fashion so that they are able to use that system, just in time system, to have that product delivered from the farm gate in Saskatchewan through the entire system to an export position in one of our ports, shipped abroad, and delivered to the importing port just in time to be able to be used in their manufacturing system.

So it is very important, Mr. Speaker, that we are able to maintain those international contracts by having in place a system that is efficient and will provide the ability for the product to be moved in a timely fashion from the farm gate through our elevator system and into the export system and then delivered to the importing country.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning when we realized there was a need to modernize the delivery system, the transport system of grain in this great province of ours, that the Grain Car Corporation and the government of the day stepped up and recognized that that need was there and that the world was changing and that the investment needed to be made in order to ensure that Saskatchewan farmers would be able to take advantage of international markets, would be able to take advantage of international markets because we're able to maintain our reputation for being able to deliver a quality product in a timely fashion so that the importing countries would certainly maintain the commitments to Canada and to Saskatchewan and to Saskatchewan producers by coming back, year in and year out, and purchasing their much-needed product.

Mr. Speaker, there's certainly a lot to be said, although like I said earlier that this is a short Bill — it only has three clauses — but there is a lot to be said for this Bill because it's such an important part of the agricultural system that we enjoy in this country and this province, and it is such an important part to maintaining that industry in a strong fashion and a positive light in as far as importing countries is concerned. We need to be able to maintain a reputation of being a country that, when we make a commitment by signing a contract, that we fulfill that commitment and we do so in a timely fashion.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, like I said, there's a lot of questions to be asked about this Bill. And I'm sure a lot of my colleagues will want to take the opportunity to ask those questions and to further quiz the government and further review the government's Bill here as to what is really the impact of the proposed changes.

As we've seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, the government may say one thing but often does another. So we want to be, we want to have the ability and reserve the ability to clearly and quite closely scrutinize the various amendments that the government's proposing here. And to do that, Mr. Speaker, we'll simply need more time. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Northeast has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 167. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 168

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 168 — *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*** 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 is my pleasure today to rise and speak to Bill 168, *The Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act*.

Mr. Speaker, I can't help but reflect with what's going on in the education system right now that there are close to roughly 12,000 teachers in Saskatchewan. So no matter how large or how small we see the changes this Bill has to their disability and their superannuation plan, the very fact of the matter is this Bill is affecting 12,000, roughly, teachers in the province and their families and, you know, by virtue through all of that, their students and the very essence of what our education system is all about.

So it makes any changes that we might wish to make to teachers' superannuation and disability plan very important changes. It makes the changes worth scrutiny. It makes us legitimately question what's causing this.

And I reflect right now that there's 12,000, roughly, teachers across the province. I understand that in recent days they've been holding meetings around the province, and part of that is to find out how strongly they feel about the potential or the proposed new contract. And as I understand, negotiations have broken off. They're not taking place right now. I know that this Bill 168 is dealing with a previous set of negotiations and this Bill is trying to — I don't want to overstate it — trying to make legal what's been the practice for some years, since 2007 is what I believe, and that is that the appropriate deductions have been made and the appropriate monies have been forwarded to the superannuation and the disability plan to in fact support those plans for the 12,000 teachers.

[15:00]

And I can't help but appreciate how important that is, because what teachers have to offer is a phenomenal wealth of knowledge, but what they have to sell is that knowledge and their time, their ability. So they've set a contract, and the agreement is that the teachers will do the best they can with their students in imparting the knowledge and the tools that students will need to not only survive, but to thrive well into the future. And in exchange the teachers will be remunerated at a certain level of pay, and of course every teacher worth their salt will want that remuneration to be fair, Mr. Speaker, would of

course want it to be fair.

And that's sort of where we're at. That was part of what led to these changes in the superannuation and disability payments from previously. And I have little doubt that that's what's behind the current negotiation is the ability to or the desire to be fair, not only to teachers but to ratepayers, and certainly fair to students. I know teachers have not got a long history of taking action against their employer, but I also know that teachers, like any other group, will deliver their services a lot better when they're satisfied and when they're happy and when they know they're being valued.

So, Mr. Speaker, the very fact that we deal with superannuation and disability benefits in 168 are some of the very basic things that teachers have to deal with on an ongoing basis. It's the very things that provide a way for school boards and governments whether it's the local school board or . . . provincial government has a role to play too. But it's how we can collectively say to teachers collectively that, we value the job you're doing. We value your importance to not only students but to the future. What you're doing is important. You're working with the very essence of our future, that is, young people.

Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with the future, part of that is, what is it that students might wish to do with their future? And it would be my hope that, well into the future, Saskatchewan will continue to produce the top-rated teachers in Canada. And that's the reality of where we're at right now. Teachers who graduate from the U of R [University of Regina] or U of S [University of Saskatchewan] are highly sought after throughout Canada. Do well at either of those two universities in the College of Education and you'll do well as a teacher, whether it's in Saskatchewan or beyond.

But that's why, part of why it is so important that we have contracts in Saskatchewan that say, we value you and you can in fact make as good a living in Saskatchewan as you could in any other province or any other part of call throughout the world. So that's why it is important that any chance we get to discuss superannuation or disability benefits or contracts with teachers, that we really should take the sober second and third and fourth look at it and make sure that we're doing things that are in the best interests of the 12,000 teachers of Saskatchewan, the students of Saskatchewan, and the ratepayers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, intertwined in all of this of course is a responsibility of government to make sure that the legislation is properly maintained. And one of the questions that we have around Bill 168, *An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act*, is how on earth could changes have been negotiated in 2007 and not picked up until 2011 where we have this Bill now enabling the legitimate, the legal distribution of the monies — this just legitimizes it? And what on earth happened for the four years up until now? How could it take so long to realize that *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act* was not current, was not properly authorizing what was negotiated properly, and what had been taking place?

You know, we see little signs of problems as days go on. We see an Act that was four years in the making. We see an economy that has some signs of trouble, quite frankly. We see

that new capital investment in February . . . The February report says new capital investment is going to be private investment up 3 per cent while public is up 21.9 per cent or nearly 22 per cent. So new capital investment driven by public, by taxpayers.

We see things on the flip side of that, like mining capital investment down 7 per cent. That doesn't bode well for the mining industry in the future. Transportation and warehousing down 7.2 per cent, finance and real estate down 3.6, all others down 2.6. So we see signs of trouble, in this case with the economy.

In the case of this Bill, we see trouble with *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act* in that it was three or four years behind the times in simply bringing the Act up to speed. And none of this leads to great confidence in the government's ability to govern.

So, you know, it is small wonder that teachers are wondering how they're valued. It's small wonder that teachers are out holding mandate votes or whatever you wish to call them, action votes. Some would call it a strike vote. I think the teachers are not classifying it as a strike vote but trying to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that they want to support their bargaining unit and they want to get a collective agreement that in fact honours the work that those 12,000 teachers are doing.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning, this Bill is important because it affects so many people and it affects the confidence that we should have in our government, in our . . . I call it department. I know the new term that is used is the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice that should bring the legislation forward. There are questions around how it is that we're at this point, you know, whoops moment, because that's really what this Bill is is a whoops moment. Whoops, the government missed bringing the legislation forward. Whoops, they didn't see the . . . or many people would argue they didn't see the value of *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act*.

And I know that any teacher that is superannuated or nearing superannuation or is using the disability benefits would think that it's a very important part of their collective agreement. It's a very important part of their contract. It's a very important part of the benefits that, or some of the benefits that would have led them into teaching as a career in the first place.

I know, I know, I'm confident that virtually every teacher would go into teaching because they wanted to impart knowledge and they thought they could do a good job of helping students improve themselves. But teachers are bright people. Teachers would have also looked at, well what's the pay scale? What's the long term? What's the superannuation? Because you know, Mr. Speaker, teaching is not a job that you tend to go into thinking, well it's going to be a six-year span or a twelve-year span and then I'll go off and I'll do something else.

Teachers see themselves clearly as educators, by and large, and they see themselves as staying in the education system basically for a career. There's no guarantees in the world that you start as a teacher and you'll end as a teacher, but educators see themselves as somewhere in the education system right

throughout.

So simply to summarize what I've been saying on Bill 168, we've got some questions. The questions clearly come from, why did it take three to four years to bring the legislation forward that simply seems to be enabling what has been the practice for three years now since a collective agreement in 2007? So why did it take so long to get *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act* updated?

And I guess a secondary question on that, Mr. Speaker, would be how can we be sure that when the current set of negotiations draws to its conclusion, as most assuredly it will . . . I'm not predicting how or when. It's just that's the nature of collective agreements, collective bargaining, is ultimately things draw to a conclusion and that both sides can live with. How can we have confidence that the government won't fumble again?

How can we have confidence that the changes in the collective agreement — any that might require changes in education Bill, or the teachers superannuation or the disability benefits Act or some other Act — how can we be sure that those will be brought forward in a timely fashion instead of us having a oops moment? Oops, it's three or four years late. Oops; we're sorry it's late, but here it is. Oops, we goofed. And that just isn't a situation that enhances the government's image in any sense, Mr. Speaker. It is a position of, quite frankly, of poor governance, of weakness, and we're not very thrilled about that.

How do we recoup from this? How does the government recoup from this? How do they again say to teachers, the 12,000 teachers around the province that, we value the work you're doing? We think that it's important that you're dealing with our very future — all of the students of Saskatchewan — imparting on them the very best of values that you can, the very best education that you can, giving these students the tools to go on to become teachers in their own right or doctors, lawyers, serving the public in some capacity, or going on to become farmers, business people, scientists, nurses, whatever. How can they take their place in our society and just bring things forward?

[15:15]

So, Mr. Speaker, I think I've pretty much outlined the concerns I have on the Bill 168, the Act to amend, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act* of 2011, but I am positive as I'm standing here that I have colleagues that will very much wish to speak to this. So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for hearing my comments here on this Bill. Mr. Speaker, thank you. I've checked my signals, and to enable colleagues to speak to this, as I know they want to, I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Coronation Park has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 168. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 153

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

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to *The Provincial Court Amendment Act*, Bill 153. First I want to deal with three housekeeping provisions of the Bill with which the opposition does not have any difficulty, I don't think.

First is that the Bill allows for the government to appoint temporary judges currently serving on the bench in other provinces where there's a conflict of interest, and that seems to be an appropriate, if rarely needed, provision. We don't have any difficulty with that.

We support the provision to bring eligibility for disability benefits to the same standard, three months, as provided other provincial government employees — again of a housekeeping nature and not posing any controversy whatsoever.

And we also support the changes to the nature of the Law Society representation on the Judicial Council to allow for more flexibility in who the Law Society appoints to the Judicial Council. We understand that this is being done because the president the Law Society, who currently sits on the Judicial Council, tends to change. That person changes on an annual basis. And I believe that's partly the case, Mr. Speaker, because nobody can afford to do that job for more than a year. It's I think a rather onerous imposition on any practising lawyer in the province of Saskatchewan to serve in that capacity for a longer period of time. So you're going to expect to have that kind of turnover on an annual basis. And so that's a provision, allowing the Law Society to provide a different bencher and maybe somebody who can sit for more than a year in the position on the Judicial Council for the sake of continuity. And that again is a provision that we support.

Three other provisions raise questions, I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker. And questions is perhaps the best way to put it, as uneasy with the argument for these provisions. All we get in opposition, of course, from the minister before we get into committee is one second reading speech, and then we don't hear from the members opposite. That's the way things go. And so no particular defence of these particular provisions, and they all raise at least questions.

The one provision that raises some questions is the repealing of the civil division of Provincial Court. Now I expect the Provincial Court did not ask for this, Mr. Speaker, because the Provincial Court had asked for a civil division. And the civil division was brought in along with the increasing amount that could be included in small claims court.

During the time I was minister of Justice, the maximum for a claim in small claims went from \$5,000 to \$25,000. And I believe that was a good thing to do. We were only constrained really by the resources of the Provincial Court to deal with all

those cases. And there's no question that small claims court was seen as more informal and accessible than even the simplified procedure in the Court of Queen's Bench to deal with claims under a certain size. And there's no magic number to \$25,000. It's just, as I said, constraint imposed by the resources of the court to deal with that many civil cases.

Well when we increased the provision for small claims and therefore the number of claims that could be brought into small claims court, the court saw the value of having expertise. The Provincial Court deals primarily with criminal cases, Mr. Speaker, and it's been estimated that 90 per cent of criminal cases are actually dealt with by the Provincial Court: guilty pleas, sentencing, trials for any number of matters are or can be conducted in Provincial Court. And it is largely a criminal court, but it does have these responsibilities for small claims and some other matters of a civil nature. And in any court that has a lot of work in an area such as the work that Court of Queen's Bench does in family law, it often makes sense to have a group of judges who work in that area a great deal and develop an expertise in that area.

And now if there's settlement discussions of civil matters in Provincial Court and provided for in legislation and in *The Provincial Court Act*, again it would be the lawyers from the civil division who would be conducting these mediations and developing an expertise in those mediations, Mr. Speaker. So moving, repealing the civil division raises some questions in our minds. Why toss these civil cases randomly out to a group of judges whose expertise of course in their day-to-day work is criminal? Why do that, Mr. Speaker? And the reason seems to be that, well we'll have these small claims cases dealt with by justices of the peace.

So on the one hand we have a government that wants to, it says — that's a bit of a red herring; it's not a bit of a red herring, Mr. Speaker, it is a red herring — elevate human rights adjudication from tribunals that have expertise to the Court of Queen's Bench. Now I say it's a red herring because in fact the effect of Bill 160 is not to have cases heard at all. That's the true effect of Bill 160. But the elevation argument that's been made to the public that, well these matters are too serious to be dealt with by anyone but judges, so we're going to elevate these to the Court of Queen's Bench.

But if you have a small claims matter — and now it can be of significant monetary amount, \$25,000 — well that can be done by a Justice of the Peace, and so we don't need a civil division of Provincial Court any more, Mr. Speaker. So on human rights cases, it's elevation, but on your small claims action, Mr. Speaker, it's, well a Justice of the Peace can do it. Doesn't necessarily have to be a lawyer, although one would hope that the justices of the peace that deal with these matters would be lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an issue of great principle, I suppose, but the trend under previous administrations was to elevate the practice in the Provincial Court. And the raising of the monetary limits for small claims and the creation of the civil division — all that was of a piece. And that does not seem to be the motivation of this government and certainly not the motivation in this Bill in respect to that provision of this Bill.

The second, I guess, of the two provisions that raise some questions for me, Mr. Speaker, is the allowing for greater public disclosure if it results in investigations into the conduct of judges by the Judicial Council. In principle and on the face of it, well who's not in favour of transparency and accountability? The government says that it is, Mr. Speaker. But it's one thing to use that as a slogan or a motto, and it's another thing to actually do it in practice.

And the question is whether a greater transparency and accountability and conducting investigations of judges in public, transparency in investigations is being imposed on the judicial branch of government than the executive branch is willing to impose on itself through legislation, Mr. Speaker. And I could make or try to make political points about that, talk about accountability and transparency and this government and wander off from the Bill a little bit, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure you'd let me go a little ways, but I'm not going to even bother doing that.

There is a point, Mr. Speaker, that there's a trade-off. The government and everybody's in favour of more accountability and transparency if somebody else has to do it, and in this case it's judges and the Judicial Council. But the trade-off potentially is judicial independence. And there is at some point where pieces like this can have the effect of executive government through legislation, this legislature and this government treating the court like it is an agency of the Minister of Justice.

Now whether this crosses the line or not, Mr. Speaker, I don't know. Whether anybody will ask the question on the part of the judiciary about it crossing the line, I don't know. But it's a question that I find, as I find the, attack might be too strong a word, but certainly the trend to lower the status of and the expertise of the Provincial Court in respect to civil matters, I find this as well troubling, Mr. Speaker.

Now some of these questions I think have been raised by my colleagues in the Assembly. I raise them again today. We will be raising them in committee. Particularly I will be asking about whether anyone has looked at the issue of judicial independence in making these rules about how the Judicial Council should conduct itself, and what is the government's overall view of the value and the purpose of the Provincial Court and particularly in respect to the changes that are being made to the civil division and the powers that are being provided to justices of the peace.

And so that that discussion can take place in committee, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill now go there.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 153, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2010* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — The Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental and Justice.

Bill No. 165

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 165 — *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2011*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to address the issues, or at least some of them, contained in Bill 165, *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act*.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of those circumstances in the law where society and what we expect from individuals in certain situations advances faster perhaps than the legislation allows for. And although the whole area of guardianship and co-decision making was probably addressed a decade or so ago, and some outmoded methods of dealing with these issues changed, I think we find ourselves again in a situation where lawyers who practise in the area a great deal and judges who deal with these kind of issues on a regular basis know how it's done. But a young lawyer, somebody through years of legal training, coming, being confronted with their first or second or third even case that involves issues of guardianship and co-decision making should be able to go to the Act and find out what you do. And that's not necessarily the case, and I think that's why we have this Bill in front of us. Practices have been developed, and they're there and people make use of them, but can't find the support or authority for some of what's done within the legislation.

[15:30]

And so this is a case I think, Mr. Speaker . . . And we sometimes have the reverse case where legislation pushes a little bit. We, society, don't get a lot of that kind of legislation from this government, Mr. Speaker, but we do get legislation like that. This is the reverse and maybe a little more common case where changes have taken place in how we deal with these issues of, particularly, caring for elders and others who can't any longer take care of themselves, and how we make sure that the powers that are provided to those people who make the decisions for others are not abused. And this is an area, of course, that's rife with the opportunity for abuse, Mr. Speaker. And it is appropriate that the legislature come back to this type of legislation, to this legislation fairly often, Mr. Speaker, and make sure that it is up-to-date and it provides all the protections that it can be provided.

So the Act sets out criteria for people who can apply for guardianship or, as the Act provides, for the recognition of foreign guardianship orders. The Act attempts to clarify inventory and accounting provisions that make it clear when they should be provided and to actually ensure they are provided and in what form they're going to be provided. There's a suggested form but not a required form and that is, I think, a welcome change.

Some of these provisions we will want to discuss in some detail as to whether they'll have the desired effect. But the principle behind them, Mr. Speaker, is not contentious: that there be annual accountings; that there be final accountings following an adult's death; that there be a filing of a bond, and some discretion on the part of the court in that respect; and detail about what payments can be made in support of an adult's family. And as I said, this is for an example, the case where in the absence of expressed legal provisions, I'm sure courts on lawyer's applications are making provisions which are proper and appropriate and commonsensical and maybe even necessary but don't have the legal empowerment and support that you would hope that they would have.

The Act, as the minister said in his second reading speech is presently silent with respect to gifts. And, Mr. Speaker, I think anybody can understand where that is an area that needs to be regulated and closely monitored, that that is potentially a loophole through which a great deal of abuse could be excused.

So the principles in the Bill I don't think are particularly contentious. The objects of the Bill I don't think are particularly contentious. I think they're well intended, Mr. Speaker, and there's not much to debate there.

The devil is in the details, and there probably needs to be more discussion about whether the Bill meets its objects, then there needs to be debate about the objects of the Bill in the House. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Bill move on to committee.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill 165, *The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2011* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental and Justice.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with importance, recognizing the importance of speaking at this point in time that I rise to speak on this Bill, concerned by the Bill that's put forward. Certainly I've spoken already to this Bill, and certainly I rise again with strong opposition to the Bill that's been put forward by the Sask Party, specifically Bill No. 161, *An Act to amend The Election Act, 1996*.

It's interesting and disappointing, Mr. Speaker, to see the Sask Party make so many regressive steps in just the past year or two by way of legislation and by way of changes, Mr. Speaker. This is certainly one of those examples where the Sask Party is removing the ability to vote for so many across this province, the ability for so many to participate in their democratic right, Mr. Speaker, and to have a say in decisions that affect almost every aspect of their daily lives, Mr. Speaker. So we see that with great disappointment.

Unfortunately this isn't a single case of its own. We see regressive steps and changes in legislation from this government on so many other fronts, Mr. Speaker. And I can highlight specifically the elimination of an independent external voice for individuals who are afflicted by poverty or disenfranchised, Mr. Speaker, the elimination of a body that was external to government to advocate and to raise the matters important to those individuals that are barely getting by, Mr. Speaker, and that are marginalized in many aspects of life and that are hurting, and that without those voices, don't have the concerns being raised, and that we as policy-makers, we as a society aren't able to make changes to resolve ourselves to addressing their circumstance. In fact, Mr. Speaker, in some ways we don't even hear those stories, those pleas, and those circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

So that's one example of a regressive move by this government. Certainly removing the right of, an ability, the ability of many young people and seniors and individuals across this province from voting is another example.

I would highlight . . . And I spoke just last week on Bill No. 160 as well, Mr. Speaker. It certainly comes in the same vein, Mr. Speaker, of regressive legislation, Mr. Speaker, that Bill itself providing . . . or receiving an international spotlight and a shameful perspective on this Sask Party government and on our province, Mr. Speaker. A Bill that in fact attacks the human rights within this province, legislation within this province, protection within this province, and by impact and by plan eliminates the voice, Mr. Speaker, of victims across this province, victims that have been abused or harassed or had their human rights breached in some fashion, Mr. Speaker, and removing and silencing those individuals, removing those

voices from the public sphere, Mr. Speaker. Removing the potential for court decisions, Mr. Speaker, that are sometimes required to better us as a society, Mr. Speaker. So another example of regressive legislation, Mr. Speaker, that is taking Saskatchewan dramatically in the wrong direction.

It's highlighting Bill 160 in its attack on human rights and the fact that Amnesty International, Mr. Speaker, a Nobel Peace Prize winning organization that leads from an international perspective, is actually weighing in on and scathing this Premier and this government for its legislation and its attack on human rights — an organization that doesn't weigh in politically in a historical fashion, Mr. Speaker, or by practice. So this is sort of a rare circumstance and one that the people of this province are ashamed of, Mr. Speaker, because in fact here in Saskatchewan we've been leaders from a social justice perspective on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker, and certainly from a human rights perspective.

But we see on many other fronts this government as well, this Sask Party government make regressive decisions, make regressive choices, and with negative impacts for Saskatchewan people. We've seen other pieces of legislation that are disappointing, where we see Bill 43 for example, Mr. Speaker, that takes away the ability for individuals to come together and organize and to speak out and to have their say, their democratic right, Mr. Speaker. Civil society, Mr. Speaker, playing the function that it should in leading positive change and recognizing and advocating and highlighting injustices, Mr. Speaker, and pushing us all to hear the matter for which they're speaking. It's disappointing to see this Sask Party government take and disable that function, to take away the ability for individuals to organize and to rally, and to take away that right of civil society, Mr. Speaker.

So on many fronts, whether it's the elimination of the voices of those afflicted by poverty, by those most marginalized in this province, whether we see it through Bill 160 with the attack on human rights that has brought us this shameful international spotlight, Mr. Speaker, whether we see it through Bill 43 that specifically prevents groups and individuals from across this province from organizing in the fashion that they should be able to in a just and civil society, Mr. Speaker, we see a regressive government.

And certainly we see it in this Bill here, Mr. Speaker, that I'm speaking to, specifically in Bill No. 161, *An Act to amend The Election Act*, a Bill that we strongly oppose, Mr. Speaker. When I say we, I speak certainly as we as the official opposition New Democrats, but I also speak we in a more global sense, Mr. Speaker, because I speak for the people of this province — many, many, Mr. Speaker, in fact countless individuals who have raised their concerns, Mr. Speaker, with both myself, but also members of the opposition and also organizations, Mr. Speaker, that oppose this Bill and oppose the actions of this government that will prevent many from casting a ballot in the next election, Mr. Speaker — a regressive move.

And when we put this in context, here we are in Saskatchewan, a once proud province as it relates to human rights and social justice and enabling voters and addressing and hearing circumstances of the marginalized, Mr. Speaker. Here we are at a time when we're sweeping those voices under the carpet,

whether that be individuals who are marginalized or afflicted by poverty, by individuals who have been harassed and abused and had their human rights breached, Mr. Speaker, and certainly in a circumstance where individuals should have the ability to participate fully in their democratic process, have a say in the fundamental decisions that affect their daily lives, Mr. Speaker. And when we look at this context, we see this right wing government with these right wing actions, these right wing pieces of legislation that hurt both Saskatchewan people and our province as a whole, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize that from a global perspective and from an international perspective that we have other nations and people from all over the world that are grappling and pushing and fighting for the very democratic rights that we had grown accustomed to in Saskatchewan, that we once fought for and once put forward with great principle, Mr. Speaker, and held up as a model to the world. We witness the unrest and the conflict and the chaos and the fighting in the Middle East, Mr. Speaker, and through North Africa, Mr. Speaker, where individuals are fighting and in fact losing their lives, Mr. Speaker, for a say in a democratic process, for democratic rights that we are afforded here in this province and in this great nation. To see this government at the same very time simultaneously removing those rights and freedoms that we have, too, put out with leadership and fought for in this province and country, Mr. Speaker, is unfortunate.

So as we see individuals, whether it be, Mr. Speaker, in Libya as we turn on the TVs tonight or recent unrest and activity through Egypt or whether it's through Jordan or through Yemen, Mr. Speaker, and we see the lives being lost to plea for a democratic process, to have a say in the decisions that impact those people's lives, we should recognize how shameful, Mr. Speaker, it is that we're regressing as a province and going backwards on this front under this right wing Sask Party Premier and government, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not without . . . It's not lost, Mr. Speaker, on Saskatchewan people what we're forfeiting in these sorts of decisions by giving up democratic rights such as participating in an election and casting a vote, Mr. Speaker. These are fundamental aspects that are the backbone of a democratic society, Mr. Speaker. And we're at our best, it is certainly our belief and the belief of the vast majority of Saskatchewan people, that we're at our best when more people participate. And we should be looking at ways to continue to enable more people to participate.

[15:45]

But we recognize that so many individual men and women are currently serving our proud nation and serving from our province, Mr. Speaker, in an Armed Forces capacity, fighting for democratic freedoms around the world. We thank them for that service. But we should not forget the important role of continuing the leadership on our home front here, Mr. Speaker, making sure that at the same time while individuals are away, that we're not having reduced or by the regressive actions of a right wing government reducing the very democratic freedoms that we have as province.

And that's exactly what's happening, Mr. Speaker, at this point

in time. While many young men and women are serving our nation and serving from Saskatchewan away from home to protect peoples around the world and protect and promote democratic freedoms, Mr. Speaker, we're witnessing right within our own province a regression under this government, a direct regression and a purposeful regression of those freedoms that we have been so privileged with, Mr. Speaker, and that we've planned for, that we've taken the leadership required, and certainly fought for, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not just individuals, Mr. Speaker, that are serving overseas right now that are fighting for those freedoms. But I think of the many seniors and veterans, Mr. Speaker, across this province that have served our nation in various conflicts and providing various securities, Mr. Speaker, done so honourably from this province and all across Canada, that should be so ashamed and are so disappointed to see this right wing Premier and Sask Party government take away the freedoms and principles for which they put their life on the line, Mr. Speaker, and in many ways and in many cases lost their lives, Mr. Speaker. And in that sense, it's the loved ones that recognize those circumstances.

The veterans that we have, Mr. Speaker, still many living from conflicts such as the Second World War, Mr. Speaker, that are going to be impeded — in a very unfortunate fashion by direct plan of this Premier — from voting in the next election is something that we should simply be ashamed of as a province, that people are ashamed of, Mr. Speaker, something we adamantly oppose as Saskatchewan New Democrats, something that I adamantly oppose, and something that we'll certainly continue to fight, Mr. Speaker.

To take away, whether it's from a veteran or from a senior, Mr. Speaker, the individuals who have been builders of our proud province and the institutions of our province that have served us so well, to take away that vote, Mr. Speaker, is something that we should all be embarrassed of that is occurring in this province and a regression that we must stand up and oppose, Mr. Speaker.

And I haven't heard an individual, a constituent, or anyone that I've sat down and talked about this Bill with or individuals who have raised with myself, I haven't heard of a supporter of this Bill individually as it relates to a meeting, Mr. Speaker. In fact, individuals, when we sit down and they have questions about this Bill, they oppose it in a huge way. They are surprised in fact, Mr. Speaker, that it's not being talked about from a broader perspective. Because it's egregious acts that we see by this government, Mr. Speaker, taking away that ability to participate in one's democracy and one's society and one's making decisions as it relates to the many different institutions and services and programs that impact individuals' lives and communities' well-being, Mr. Speaker.

And so I highlight specifically how shameful it is to be doing this directly to the seniors and to veterans and the builders of this province. But it's wrong to be doing it to anyone, Mr. Speaker, any citizen of this province. And particularly highlighting, as well, young people, Mr. Speaker, who I would argue are more equipped and ready to participate in democracy than ever before, Mr. Speaker, that are by way of their education and their mindset, we should be looking at every

mechanism, tool, to get these young people out to vote, to have their say, to take leadership roles, Mr. Speaker, in our communities, in our structures, and to be casting that ballot and shaping their future, Mr. Speaker. I'm absolutely confident that these young people are ready to do so.

I hear members opposite sort of ridicule what they see as apathy in young people, and this does nothing, Mr. Speaker, to invoke the sort of participation that we should with young people, young people who we'd be, that we'd be well served by having them fully involved in the decisions of the day, Mr. Speaker.

And now we may not always agree with everything that's brought forward by any demographic, Mr. Speaker, by any individual, but that's sort of the fundamental principle of democracy, Mr. Speaker. And I think, and I'm an adamant believer that this is the wrong-headed direction to be going, to be disabling individuals from casting their vote — young people, seniors, veterans — we should be looking at mechanisms and processes, Mr. Speaker, that enable more people to vote, to turn up voter turnout, Mr. Speaker, to engage young people and individuals across this province in a fashion for which they take purpose in their democracy.

And the decisions that are being made today, Mr. Speaker, on so many different fronts, impact us a generation down the road or two generations down the road. And the young people of today, our First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker, have a vested interest in those decisions and the well-being of their communities not only today, Mr. Speaker, but also 10 years from now and not only 10 years from now, Mr. Speaker, but 20 years from now. Many of these young people, Mr. Speaker, are looking well beyond that as well, and they're looking 30 and 40 and 50 years. They're looking at their own lives and how they fit into Saskatchewan, how they fit into our communities, and what kind of policies and what sort of government serves them, Mr. Speaker. But they're also looking in a broader context, and they're looking at what sort of Saskatchewan serves all Saskatchewan people.

And individuals have their different issues that are most important to them, and we should be, we should be reaching out, Mr. Speaker, to empower, to involve, and to provide the opportunities for young people and all individuals across this province to be fully engaged from a democratic perspective. And we see that that's not the case.

The unfortunate reality of why this Bill is even before us here today, Mr. Speaker, is the shrewd political direction of this government to exclude many individuals, Mr. Speaker, for whom have been failed by this Premier and by this right wing government, Mr. Speaker. And it's an unfortunate circumstance, Mr. Speaker, to see a government that has had so many failings, whether it be with First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker, or with seniors across this province, rural and urban, or with young people, Mr. Speaker, who recognize that this government's failing to plan for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, but not only for tomorrow but the generation down the road, and to have the prudent planning and the vision that ensures that we have the kind of prosperity and well-being that we must have and deserve to have here in this province many, many years down the road, Mr. Speaker.

And we see this Premier decide to intervene in that political process by removing the ability for many of those young people for whom have been failed, the seniors that have been failed from casting a ballot in the next election. We simply say that that's wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And the list of, the list of failings, Mr. Speaker, of course is long, and that's not where I intend to take my speech today, Mr. Speaker. But of course we get the countless calls and emails and phone calls on so many different fronts. And I hear about it in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

But specifically if we're talking about the many seniors in this province, Mr. Speaker, who have worked to build this province, who are now being let down by this government on the front of health care, basic health services, both rural and from an urban perspective, Mr. Speaker, and we see now this government try to exclude them from coming out and casting their ballot . . . Unfortunate when we see a government that's closed down long-term care facilities that have served a community and been built by communities, Mr. Speaker, and closed down beds, Mr. Speaker, and now preventing those very individuals who fundraised and built those structures, that made sure those sort of protections and securities were in place that are now being closed down, are going to be prevented, Mr. Speaker, from the voting in the next election, is simply wrong.

And people see through it and they see this is a shrewd move and they don't support it. And it's against the democratic freedoms that we support as a province. They're against the democratic freedoms that we fought for as a nation and that individuals in this province have fought for, Mr. Speaker.

So we certainly, from a shrewd perspective, recognize why this government I suspect is preventing many seniors from voting in the next election. The failures in health services, the failures in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, the failures in many ways to ensure that individuals are protected against the inflationary pressures, the massive cost-of-living pressures that can be directly attributed, many of them, directly to this Premier and this government, Mr. Speaker. Pressures that in fact, in costs of living, that have put a burden on seniors across this province, Mr. Speaker, in a way that they simply can't manage and have put many either under water or burdened the well-being and quality of life that they've worked so hard to put forward, Mr. Speaker.

And I see it all the time, Mr. Speaker, seniors that simply can't afford rent anymore, Mr. Speaker, and in fact don't have an adequate place to move to, displaced from their homes. And, Mr. Speaker, when you get those calls, whether it's a young mother or a senior, it doesn't make it easier on either circumstance, Mr. Speaker, as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] — and the calls are common from within to our offices — as far as what sort of advice and what sort of solution you can offer to these individuals. Because there's not much that we can offer as an individual opposition MLA when you take that call, Mr. Speaker.

This takes priorities of government. It takes a vision. It takes a plan, and people recognize when they've been failed, Mr. Speaker. And watching seniors in these circumstances and individuals across the province of all demographics and their

level of frustration and hurt and lack of dignity, Mr. Speaker, that many are feeling — and that's their words put to us, Mr. Speaker — is unsettling, is something that we simply shouldn't sit by idly and observe. It should go well beyond just a question period discussion in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And I can say it's something that we'll certainly be continuing to fight, individuals that will be continuing to fight for and put forward positive solutions that address, address those circumstances within their lives. And I think it's just simply wrong, Mr. Speaker, that we have a government that's advancing legislation, recognizing that they failed so many in this province, that's going to prevent those individuals from going out and casting a ballot.

Now many of those individuals, Mr. Speaker, don't realize that right now. Many of those seniors, whether it's in Wawota where they've had the beds closed down on them, Mr. Speaker, and they're frustrated on those, they're aware of that, but many of those individuals aren't aware that they're . . . of what the new provisions are for voting, what the changes are that this regressive Sask Party has put forward. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, many of them aren't going to realize that until they go to cast their ballot on election day, Mr. Speaker. Now it's going to be a sad day, Mr. Speaker, on election day to see many individuals that are going to cast their ballot, for whatever party, Mr. Speaker, for whatever party and for whatever issues are important to them, when they're turned away from the polls.

It's going to be a sad story, Mr. Speaker, one that we've talked about in this Assembly from the moment that this piece of legislation was put forward — a piece of legislation that's not supported by research, it's not supported by objective information, it's not supported by a Chief Electoral Officer, as I understand, Mr. Speaker, and a piece of legislation that has a direct impact on Saskatchewan people. And indeed it's going to be a sad day on November 7th, Mr. Speaker, if this government continues to bull ahead in this regressive fashion to have many seniors, Mr. Speaker, many young people or First Nations and Métis people show up at the polls, Mr. Speaker, with purpose, with purpose and looking to the future and looking to their own lives, Mr. Speaker, looking at their communities, all the different aspects that individuals factor in when they cast their vote. And when they go to cast that vote, they're going to realize that this right wing Premier has taken away that democratic right from them, Mr. Speaker. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, and we shouldn't tolerate it in this province, and we should be ashamed.

And as we have young men and women serving us abroad, Mr. Speaker, serving our international community abroad and their families are left here right now and they're standing up for democratic freedoms a world away, Mr. Speaker, fighting for the well-being of and democratic freedoms that we have taken for granted in some cases here, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, it's slipping away in their own home jurisdiction.

And those very individuals are going to be back here and recognize . . . Now it may not impact them. Maybe they have the adequate legislation but I guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that individuals will see this as an egregious act, a Bill that takes us in the wrong direction, one that unfortunately is in line with the many other regressive Bills we've seen from this government,

Mr. Speaker. And there's been many of them and many actions that are of that regressive direction, Mr. Speaker, of taking us in the wrong direction. I've referenced a few before, but certainly the attack on human rights by way of Bill 160 in silencing of individuals that have had their human rights breached, Mr. Speaker, that have been harassed, that are victims, is wrong. We need those voices, Mr. Speaker, to better us as a community, as a province, to resolve ourselves and to put forward laws and resources to improve us as a province, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

The Bill is wrong. It's in the wrong direction. It's regressive. We see it in Bill 43 that individuals, when you explain this to them, that the democratic right to assemble in a free and civil society as we would have come to expect, certainly in Saskatchewan, is being taken away and undermined by this government and has been taken away. That Bill has already been moved, Mr. Speaker, taking away the ability for the public to come together and have their say and raise injustices or perceived injustices, Mr. Speaker — at the very least being able to have the ability to put issues and matters into the public sphere, Mr. Speaker.

The removal of that discussion and public discourse is the wrong direction to go, Mr. Speaker. We should be embarrassed as a province that this once proud province from a perspective of social justice and human rights and having our say, not only in Saskatchewan but influence across our great nation and across North America, our continent, Mr. Speaker . . . It's disappointing and it's wrong. We have individuals . . . The fact that we're removing the ability for these young individuals or for any segment of society or any individual, Mr. Speaker, to rally and to raise their concern is wrong, Mr. Speaker.

We might not always like what we hear, Mr. Speaker, and we might not always agree with the grievances we hear or the matters of the day, but then that's our job, Mr. Speaker, as policy makers, to listen to that public discourse, to level with Saskatchewan people, and to engage in that discussion. To stymie and stifle and drive those discussions underground is simply wrong, just as it is wrong, Mr. Speaker, to remove the voice of victims of human rights breaches, Mr. Speaker, of harassments and abuses, those that have been wronged.

And those stories can be ugly, Mr. Speaker. They're simply wrong. And not only does it serve us well to have an ability to have those stories public for us to resolve ourselves to a better day, to resource and to plan to ensure that we protect. Also there's a net benefit to the public, Mr. Speaker, in understanding some of the ills of society, recognizing how they can play a role within their own community, within their own family, and within their own lives, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the actions that are egregious and wrong are not continued, Mr. Speaker. And we're not well served. And what we see is in that piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, the impact is that voices won't be heard, and that cases, Mr. Speaker, or judicial decisions simply won't occur. Removal of the tribunals and . . . Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that those decisions are quite simply required sometimes, and that those too shape society, just as do the Bills of today and the decisions in an individual's daily life.

But we shouldn't be hiding the ills of our society. We should be dealing with them head-on and improving the circumstance for individuals and people across this province. And certainly we see this sort of brushing of voices under the carpet. As well right here in Regina, where at a time where individuals and families are under profound challenge by the rising costs of living, by poverty, by barely able to kind of make ends meet and the strain that that provides across families, Mr. Speaker, we see this government remove the independent and external voice of advocacy for those individuals, the voice that carries that not only to government but also to the public, Mr. Speaker. And that of course being the removal of the Welfare Rights Centre and removing that mechanism that must be independent and external to government to serve those that are so marginalized, Mr. Speaker.

Now the sad circumstance is that individuals don't hear those voices otherwise. It's not as though these individuals that are in near-crisis circumstances or crisis circumstances have the ability in many circumstances or recognize the processes to raise their voices otherwise, to have their say. But it's important for us to have those voices as part of our public discourse and certainly as part of our political decisions and policy decisions, Mr. Speaker. So we see regressive actions across the piece, Mr. Speaker, by way of decisions, but also by way of legislation from this Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker.

And we see it continue in the Bill we're fighting here today and opposing here today, Mr. Speaker, and that most of Saskatchewan is opposed to, Mr. Speaker, that being Bill 161, the Act that eliminates the ability for many to participate in the next election, the Act, Mr. Speaker, that proves once again that the Sask Party's more than willing to intervene in our democratic process. This is offside with Saskatchewan values. This is offside with Canadian values, Mr. Speaker.

We shouldn't just be ashamed that we have an international spotlight that's on the human rights legislation put forward by this government. We should be ashamed, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that as Saskatchewan people we have a set of values and that this Bill and these other Bills are counter to those values, Mr. Speaker — ones of inclusion, ones that recognize that we're better served when all individuals have a say in the decisions that impact their daily lives, Mr. Speaker, now and well into the future.

So we talk about the shrewd decision of this Premier again to intervene in the democratic process by way of reducing many from voting or eliminating many from voting in the next election, Mr. Speaker. And we see it, of course, as a direct consequence of this Premier and this government's failings of responding to those needs of those individuals. Democracy should trump shrewd political decisions any day of the week, Mr. Speaker, and we are disappointed that that's not the case with this Premier and this government, Mr. Speaker.

I talked about the failings. I highlighted the many for seniors across the piece and I highlight the many for young people, whether it be students who are struggling or can't access the child care they are requiring, Mr. Speaker, or the students that can't access the education that they desire to, Mr. Speaker. That's the case for many now, Mr. Speaker. It's not a matter of whether or not you have the ability and simply want to go to

school. Under this Premier and under the direction that we're taking, far more, more and more students are simply not able to attend whether it be post-secondary, Mr. Speaker, university and college, not only because their tuition is increasing, Mr. Speaker, in such a significant way, but because of the skyrocketing costs of housing, Mr. Speaker.

And those students, Mr. Speaker, those students, Mr. Speaker, are opposed to the direction of this government. They question all the time, Mr. Speaker. They hear from this Premier talking about the riches of government, all the money that government has, but then they're sharing how that doesn't connect in any way to the circumstances that they're dealing with, the fact they can't find adequate housing, Mr. Speaker, the fact that they can't afford the tuition increases. Or you bundle all those increases together, Mr. Speaker. Many individuals are not able to advance their life here in Saskatchewan the way that they deserve and the way that they're accustomed to.

Now I'm getting heckled by one of the, a couple of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, who in fact are supporters of this Bill. And they're asking, specifically they're asking, what Bill are we speaking to? And it's Bill 161, the Bill put forward by this government, Mr. Speaker, that is eliminating many people from, eliminating many people from voting in the next election. And what we recognize is that it's a shrewd move by this Premier and this government, Mr. Speaker, to prevent many from voting in the next election that have been failed by the government. I was highlighting about the circumstances of students, Mr. Speaker. I've talked too about the circumstances of seniors. Many have been, so many have been failed, Mr. Speaker; so many feel that the burden of cost of living, Mr. Speaker, across this province.

And we have a Minister of Social Services who chooses to heckle here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, instead of taking leadership from a perspective and recognizing that we'd be better off from a social services perspective, Mr. Speaker, if all individuals had a say in their democratic process and the decisions that impact their lives, that we're better off, Mr. Speaker, if that very minister hadn't intervened and taken away the voice, Mr. Speaker, of individuals who are impacted by poverty, Mr. Speaker, impacted by cost of living, by way of removing the independent and external advocate, Mr. Speaker, who speaks for the individuals who are impacted by poverty, Mr. Speaker.

So we have all these individuals and groups across this province that have been, demographics that have been failed by this government. Now we see the piece of legislation that's put out and intended to take away their ability to participate on November 7th, 2011. And it's sad, Mr. Speaker, because individuals across this province, many of them have no awareness that this debate is going on in this Assembly. Many of them have no understanding that this Bill's been put forward and that we have this right wing move, Mr. Speaker.

And we have all the time in the world to repeal this Bill or to remove this Bill from consideration and to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. But shamefully we see this Premier forge ahead.

And the circumstance is going to be that, whether it's the member from Martensville, Mr. Speaker, is going to have some

young people in her constituency if this government continues to forge ahead, Mr. Speaker, on November 7th, some young people that are going to show up at the polls, Mr. Speaker, that day. And I don't know who they'll vote for, Mr. Speaker, because that's their right, and they will make that decision out of a whole host of matters that are important to them. But when those individuals, Mr. Speaker — and maybe voting for the very first time in their life, Mr. Speaker — and they get to the polls to cast their ballot for whomever, and maybe they'd actually vote for the member from Martensville. Maybe they wouldn't. That doesn't matter to any one of us. The fact is that the democratic process and principles are more important than any shrewd decision of the day.

But when that individual and those young people that show up at those polls for the very first time and are turned away because they don't have the adequate identification, that's a wrong day in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's a sad day in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's one that we're going to continue to fight as New Democrats and that I'm going to continue to fight to make sure it doesn't occur. And we have opportunity; this Bill hasn't passed yet, Mr. Speaker.

Now we haven't seen a signal from government that they're willing to pull this Bill, Mr. Speaker, but it's shameful that they're not willing. It's not consistent with any sort of a study that says this is the way to go. It doesn't address a problem, Mr. Speaker, that has been highlighted, simply a move to intervene in the political process. And certainly it's not foreign to this Premier and this government to intervene in democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Of course we always hear the continued allegations and concerns of the PC [Progressive Conservative] trust fund dollars, Mr. Speaker, where we have a Premier and this government sitting on dollars that are preventing a party from having their say, Mr. Speaker, from participating in both the last election and this election, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not the first time that this Premier and this government have intervened in the well-being of our democracy. Just a short while ago, we had the big debate in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, where we had this circumstance that was so troubling and that has continued, Mr. Speaker, where they intervened in the hiring of a Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Speaker, an individual who's there to uphold and ensure the well-being of our democratic process. A sad day once again, Mr. Speaker, as we watched this Premier and this government intervene in that process, Mr. Speaker, vetoed a position from a bipartisan committee, Mr. Speaker, a decision for which the Attorney General of this province had been fully involved in, Mr. Speaker, to veto that decision, Mr. Speaker.

So we see case after case, Mr. Speaker, of intervening in our democratic process, which is a sad circumstance for the people of this province, something that the people of this province are opposed to, Mr. Speaker. And we recognize it in the context of all of this turmoil in many nations worldwide, through the Middle East and through northern Africa, fighting for the democratic freedoms and protections and ability to vote that we have been so proud to have here in this province.

The member from Moose Jaw North, Mr. Speaker, heckles

from his feet, however we never hear that member give a speech from the floor, Mr. Speaker. In fact he's a silent member, Mr. Speaker. We haven't heard . . . I think we heard him say a member's statement once, Mr. Speaker, but we don't see him stand up and to stand up for individuals in his constituency, Mr. Speaker. What we do see that individual doing is removing the ability for individuals in his constituency to vote. What we do see, Mr. Speaker, is we see many individuals in his constituency who are failed, and we're all failed by the attack on human rights legislation, Mr. Speaker. So on so many fronts we see the member from Moose Jaw North, who likes to heckle from this seat, but isn't willing to have the integrity to take the floor and state his . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I would caution the member not to impugn the . . . [inaudible] . . . of any member. I would ask him to withdraw that last remark.

[16:15]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I will withdraw the statement with respect to integrity and continue on with your permission, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly that member from Moose Jaw North, who heckles while we speak about egregious and regressive Acts, Mr. Speaker, has the ability, if he has beliefs, if he is representing his constituents, to take the floor of this Assembly to speak to legislation, to represent their views. And we seen none of that happen with that member, Mr. Speaker, yet he heckles from his seat And I see him over there now; he's back into his solitaire game I suspect, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I would ask the member not to reflect on a member either being in the House or being outside the House and not to make assumptions about any member in the House. I would ask the member to continue on the Bill that is up here for debate, 161.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But what we recognize is just that the many concerns with this piece of legislation, how offside it is with the very principles and values of Saskatchewan people, we recognize that it's not solving any problem that's been laid out, Mr. Speaker. In fact it's simply a shrewd political move, Mr. Speaker.

And we see this, of course, being the government and the Premier that have been more than willing to intervene in our democratic process over the past few years, Mr. Speaker, to the detriment of Saskatchewan people and to the province as a whole. Because I'm an adamant believer that we're best served by all Saskatchewan people having their best opportunity to participate in democracy.

It's a sad circumstance that we're spending the resources and time in this Assembly to debate this Bill that should simply be pulled, Mr. Speaker, instead of having a debate about how do we enable more individuals and empower more individuals to participate in our democracy. There's many different aspects we could look at there, Mr. Speaker, a broad discussion. And instead of looking at ways to improve voter turnout, to engage young people, to make sure that seniors, the builders of this province can cast their ballot and be a part of decisions that

impact them today and well into the future, we're seeing this government move in an opposite direction of removing many, eliminating many from voting in the next election, Mr. Speaker.

We should be looking at the opposite conversation. The positive one, Mr. Speaker, about how do we increase engagement from whether it's youth or whether it's First Nations and Métis or whether we make sure that seniors continue to have the ability to participate and shape the province for which they've had this proud history of building, Mr. Speaker.

And it's interesting to recognize that this government advances this piece of legislation at the same very time that we see a challenge, a Supreme Court challenge in British Columbia, Mr. Speaker — something that's going on as we speak — of the federal law that's very similar to this one, Mr. Speaker. And we see that legal challenge, and we see that that challenge is being led, Mr. Speaker, by a group of organizations including individuals representing people with disabilities, Mr. Speaker, seniors, renters, people who are homeless, but not just those individuals but the broad public, Mr. Speaker, who recognize that it's wrong to take away the vote of individuals who should have a say in the decisions that affect their lives, Mr. Speaker. And that's a broad group of individuals, a broad coalition, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize that we have a government that's making it harder for people to vote, instead of looking at ways to make it easier for people to vote. We have a government who's looking to reduce participation in the decisions of today, instead of increase that participation, Mr. Speaker, and it's a wrong direction all the way across the board.

And I've highlighted the many other circumstances, Mr. Speaker, of who is impacted by this legislation, but it's individuals in all of our constituencies, Mr. Speaker — seniors, individuals of all demographics and ages, First Nations and Métis in a significant way, young people in a significant way, Mr. Speaker — and it's disappointing and wrong to see this government continue to put this forward.

And it's shame, Mr. Speaker, that if this Bill isn't pulled, Mr. Speaker, and it's pushed ahead by this aggressive Premier, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be a shame to come to November 7th, Mr. Speaker, and to see a young Métis individual, first-time voter get turned away because they don't have the identification that this Premier has put in place, Mr. Speaker. Or, Mr. Speaker, the senior who's been a builder of the province, Mr. Speaker, an individual who maybe lives in Wawota, Mr. Speaker, who's been impacted by decisions of this government, who comes out to cast their vote, and yet they're prevented from casting that vote, Mr. Speaker, or the young people for whom I get calls from all the time, young mothers and young fathers for whom are being displaced from their home on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker.

And the member from Regina South can joke about this all he wants. But it's a sad phone call to take, Mr. Speaker, and we take them from his constituency as well. And it's young mothers, young fathers, and parents who are being displaced from their homes. And that member who can heckle from his seat all he wants, but the fact is this is the harsh reality for many, Mr. Speaker, in our province right now.

And we've seen nothing but inaction for the last four years, and we've seen nothing but inaction now. And then those individuals who are going to have a say in the next election are going to go out for whomever they want to vote for may get turned away, Mr. Speaker, from that ability to do so. And that's wrong, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing more sad than witnessing some of the circumstances that we're seeing within this province for some of these young families. And if we take away that ability for them to have a say in their community, here and well into the future, that's simply wrong. It's fundamentally wrong, and it's not in line with Saskatchewan values. It's not in line with democratic values. It's not in line with democratic freedoms that we have upheld in an international perspective, Mr. Speaker.

We have many veterans, Mr. Speaker, that have fought for these democratic freedoms from a global perspective in international communities and fought against the anti-democratic forces of other nations. And here we're slipping away here in Saskatchewan. We're moving in the wrong direction.

Saskatchewan people oppose that, Mr. Speaker. It's wrong. We've been a model for many years from a perspective of social justice, from a perspective from legislation, Mr. Speaker, that protects Saskatchewan people in communities. And we have a right wing, regressive Premier and government that are taking us in the wrong direction.

Mr. Speaker, I have many things I could say. I'm disappointed that we're spending this much time talking about this Bill that should simply be pulled because what we should do is, we should have this Bill pulled right now, Mr. Speaker. And we should have the immediate discussion about how, Mr. Speaker, how we ensure that more people participate in the decisions that impact their lives, their communities' lives, and the well-being of our province. How do we engage more people, Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan, of all demographics — not just seniors, not just First Nations and Métis, not just young people, but all people, Mr. Speaker? And we see that we're going in the wrong direction.

But at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, and with many more things to say to this Bill, many more questions to have, and with great concerns and great opposition to this wrong-headed legislation, wrong-headed direction by this regressive Premier, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks at this point in time and cede the floor to my colleague who has certainly more to say on this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to get in and speak a bit about Bill No. 161, *An Act to amend the Election Act*. And I just want to thank the previous speaker, my colleague from Regina Rosemont. I think he gave a very thoughtful, well-balanced speech about the issues around Bill 161.

It is ironic at this time, when we watch the news about what's happening in Libya, what happened in Egypt, and we think about how important it is, the democratic rights to participate. To participate is the issue, to participate. And my colleague

spoke very eloquently about the issues about what's really important here, what's really important here.

And I think about, a year ago, what happened in Poland with the plane crash where so many of the leadership of the Polish government died, and we reflect about what happened in Eastern Europe over the many, just recent past decades, about the battle, the battle to get democracy into Poland and the several countries that had lost that after World War II. And I'm sure in these shipyards of Poland they weren't saying, they were not saying, what we need is photo ID [identification]. We need photo ID, that's what'll make the difference. What they were saying, what they were demanding is the right to participate, the right to participate. And they're not saying, we need photo ID.

This is really wrong-headed, and we need to really rethink this. And I think that if people are thinking that we're wasting the time this afternoon, I would agree with the member from Regina Rosemont. Let's pull this Bill. Let's just get rid of it, start over again. Talk to the stakeholders, talk to the people about what's important.

And I have to tell you, you know, I think it is ironic that this government, this government when we see them dealing with one of the major, if not the most pressing issues that families, especially young families and seniors are facing in Saskatchewan — housing — they're having a summit. And they're saying, come to the summit but pay \$150. Pay \$150 because that's what this summit's going to cost. I cannot believe that when we're dealing with issues that affect people, and this government collects taxes to facilitate the kind of discussions, and yet they're charging people to come to this summit \$150. And they're probably going to have photo ID. I wonder if they're going to have photo ID at that housing summit. We want 150 bucks, but we also want to see your ID. Incredible. Incredible.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, as I was reading through this, preparing for this, and I was looking back at some of the news stories. And this is one by Angela Hall of *Leader-Post*, December 1st, 2010. The title of the news story is "Rule to require ID for voting." And I found it passing strange here that some of the comments that were made by the Justice minister, and I'll quote. I quote, "Justice Minister Don Morgan said federal elections and provincial elections in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec already require voters to show approved ID."

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are the provinces that have rent control. How can it be? You like the photo ID but you don't like the rent control. How can that be? You pick and choose what you like and how to answer the question. How is it that when you talk about British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec with the ID, that's good? That's good. But when it comes to talk about rent control that 80 per cent of Canadians have, that's not good; that's not relevant. We do it our own way here in Saskatchewan. We think about what's best for Saskatchewan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. Either you like what these other provinces are doing and you take a look and say, hey that's a valid point. Here's the Justice minister in the public press saying it's a valid point. But when it comes to other issues — and I've got to tell you, rent control's a

very important issue — they dismiss it right away. So which is it? It's either relevant or is it irrelevant? What is it? You can't have it both ways.

And, Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say, he goes on to say, and I quote, "Saskatchewan is not taking the step in response to any specific incident, but . . . [and he quotes] 'enhance the integrity' of the system, he said." And of . . . Well I'll continue. He goes on and he says, "Morgan said he doesn't think the move will disenfranchise voters."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I find that very interesting that because . . . And I have to say so many of our members on this side have said this so well around the whole issue of what really is the problem facing democracy today. It's participation. We're in the midst, we're in the midst of yet another federal election. Another federal election and here we have a federal government that's been found in contempt of parliament, in contempt of parliament and because of that here we are in the midst of an election. And I think one of the biggest issues that we can all agree on is, what will be the participation rates here in Canada? Here in Canada we see people moving away because they're seeing whether it's the federal parliament or this provincial legislature act in such a way as to discount what really is important to people in this province, and we know people in this province want to vote.

But you know, on Saturday I was talking to a young woman about voting and saying, you should get out and vote. You should vote. It doesn't matter, and I think the member from Rosemont even said this, it doesn't matter how you vote. You have the right to choose. You have the right to choose, but please do vote. Please do vote. And she's saying, it doesn't matter. And she's looking at the federal government and she's looking at a provincial government and saying, it really doesn't matter, does it? It really doesn't matter because when she thinks about the rent she's paying, it really doesn't matter because this government . . . Well they can use the language like unacceptable or rogue landlords. Nothing's going to change. And that's her words. She says, nothing's going to change.

[16:30]

And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, as a member of this legislature I am very proud of the work that we do. And we try to do the best for people in Saskatchewan. But the problem is sometimes we have our priorities wrong. And this government clearly has its priority wrong when it comes to this because if he's saying we just want to enhance the integrity of the system, the minister wants to enhance the integrity of the system, I've got to tell you I don't know where he was, where he's been thinking about the last several elections. We see the participation rate go down, and we see young people moving away from voting and thinking it's important to exercise their franchise. They're moving away. They're saying it really doesn't matter because you see governments, whether it's the provincial level or the federal level, just not really caring, just not really caring. They see it's more important to be talking to the stakeholders and getting caught up in its integrity. Of course we all want to see integrity.

And I have to tell you as a sidebar to this, Mr. Speaker, that we were all surprised. I understand it's been the common practice

up to this piece of legislation that all the political parties would have a chance to be involved in the discussion of any changes to *The Election Act* or the municipal elections Act, and I kind of feel like this is a step backwards. It's got to be a step backward when one side can say, hey listen, we've got the majority. We're just going to do what we feel is the thing we need to do, the thing we need to do. And we see this happen too often where the government, you know, the past two or three years have just decided that they're going to do whatever they want. And they may get a few days of bad press, a few angry people.

But, you know, it's growing. It's growing. It's growing, and more and more people are realizing that this is a problem. And whether it's Bill 161 or the human rights Bill, and I believe that's 160, people are going to see when they go to the election day that they thought they could go and exercise their franchise and it's just not the case.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there is a few specific concerns, and I'm going to talk about them now because I do have some more issues about the whole process. But I do want to raise a couple of specific points, and it's under section 4. It's the section 71 amended, and it's section 4(1):

(b) by repealing subclause (b)(i) and substituting the following:

“(i) confirm the voter’s identity and place of ordinary residence by having another voter who meets the requirements of subsection (1.1) vouch for the identity and residence of the voter by completing the prescribed forms”.

And it goes on, section 2:

(2) The following subsection is added after subsection 71(1):

“(1.1) For the purposes of subclause 1(b)(i):

(a) a voter who intends to vouch for another voter must provide the poll clerk with the satisfactory evidence of the voter’s identity and ordinary residence required pursuant to section 72.1 before vouching for another voter . . .

Now I'll just take a minute and explain what the issue is here. And it's a big issue in my riding because I have many shelters, and many of the folks will be going to vote. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if I have three or four or five shelters in my riding. The biggest one of course is the Salvation hostel or shelter on the corner of Avenue B and 19th.

And the issue there is having these folks go to vote. And I know in the last election, they did raise this issue about what happened when they went to vote. And there was one driver, one employee who had the proper registration. He took two or three, or I think three or four people down to the voting station to vote, and he was going to vouch for the other people that he took down.

When he got there, he was told no, you can only vouch for one person. The others are out of luck. So it's a one-to-one

relationship in the shelter. And I think that's unfair. These people are down on their luck. They're in the shelter. They're staying there, and they've developed a relationship with the staff. But it's impossible to have a one-to-one ratio of people going down to vote down at the voting station. And in this case it'd be pretty reasonable to say, you know, I think the employee who is vouching for the others could vouch for several people. I think that's really reasonable.

But as I say, and it goes on to continue, 4(2)(1.1)(b) “no voter shall vouch for more than one other voter at an election”. So my question is, why is that? Why is that? I mean is it set up? I can see maybe a limit of something but gee, here you have clearly, why is it one?

Even within a family, even if you were taking your children down and for some reason they don't have their ID with them. Maybe they're in another city; they've come back. In my case they'd be coming back maybe from Regina up to Saskatoon. And you've got two or three kids with you and they're all the right age and they're on the voter list, but they don't have any ID. The parent can only vouch for one child — have to pick a favourite. I mean, why is it one? Why? Why did they pick one? Why did they pick one? So we have . . .

Now here are two examples that I've thought of why this section doesn't make any sense. Why one? When you've got a family circumstance, and I think there'd probably be a situation where you might have more than one, you might . . . I think this is something that really needs to be revisited but it is a problem. And you know the odd thing is, Mr. Speaker, if there was consultation beforehand, this was identified to me, so it's no speaker, it's no secret. If I know about it, how can it be that others didn't know about it? How can it be that others didn't know about it? So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is problematic.

Now I have to say that when I go on and read this new section 72 and 72(1), the title is, and I quote, “**When individual not entitled to ballot paper or to vote.**” It goes on:

72(1) No individual is entitled to ballot paper or to vote if the individual:

- (a) does not provide to the deputy returning officer and poll clerk the satisfactory evidence of his or her identity and ordinary residence required pursuant to section 72.1; or
- (b) if required to do so, refuses to make the voter's declaration.

Goes on:

(2) No deputy returning officer shall give a ballot paper to an individual described in subsection (1).

And I'm saying this for the folks at home because they may be curious. They don't have this information in front. But here is the salient point. This is the point that I want to get across, 72:

(3) The poll clerk shall note the following in the poll book:

- (a) if a voter who is required to do so fails to provide the

satisfactory evidence of the voter's identity and ordinary residence required pursuant to section 72.1;

(b) if a voter who is required to do so refuses to make a voter's declaration.

So there you go. So when that happens and they don't do that, all right, and it goes on to say that it will be recorded in the poll book. And I'm just curious about why and how will it be recorded in the poll book. Now I have to find that specific legislation because I find that very interesting that that will be recorded in the poll book. And how will that be recorded? Is it part of the spoiled ballots? Or will we see a new increase in the number of spoiled . . . Yes.

"The poll clerk shall note the following in the poll book:" that they refuse to make the voter's declaration or they don't have the ID. So what are we going to see? Will that be as part of the spoiled ballot category or is there going to be a new category of people disenfranchised? Will we see how people's votes are marked? I mean they don't even get to spoil a ballot, so they didn't even get the paper. So will this be a new category? Will we know how many people will be turned away from voting in Saskatchewan because of this new piece of legislation? I'm going to be very curious to see if that's going to be an increase.

And what's unacceptable? Last week we heard the Premier use the word unacceptable about the rent increases. Well I'm curious to know: will he put out a benchmark about what is unacceptable for the number of people who will be turned away in the November 7th election because they didn't have the ID? Will we be able to see this number? Will this government be transparent and show and share this with people here in the province?

I think we're seeing a time bomb just ticking away. And it will be interesting. I'm going to be looking for this. I'm going to be looking for how many people were turned away and recorded. It sounds like it will be recorded in the poll book according to this legislation. So very interesting to see if that will happen.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is such a troubling piece of legislation. I do have to . . . And I go back, and I will keep going back to this to say that the previous speaker from Regina Rosemont — I was listening intently — made some really good points. But the best one he said is, this should be just pulled. And I would say pull it and shred it. Let's move on to something that is very important to people in Saskatchewan, very important.

And I will just continue with that story. I have to say, the Justice minister when he was reflecting on the rules required to vote, this is that story, *Leader-Post*, December 1st. And here he's saying, and I quote. And this is a direct quote from him. I quote:

If you plan your affairs, you should have no difficulty voting. But if you think you're going to be going out at five minutes before election time without anything, you're not likely going to be able to vote.

Well what a lecture. What a lecture to young people, to seniors, to people who are trying to put their ID in order. And I can't

believe the kind of attitude. It's simply when he has, when he can say that kind of thing in the public press and say, get your life together in five minutes, I think he's a little bit out of touch.

People are dealing with many issues in Saskatchewan. And one of them, I was surprised and amazed about the whole challenges about identification. Many of us take it for granted, but for many it is a real, real challenge. And I know within my own riding there is a special project and it was funded actually by the Saskatoon Foundation, and I think the Community Initiative Funds even gave them some money — Project ID — that worked with several people. In fact it was 2 or 300 people who came in and asked about how can they get, how can they get their ID together?

And it takes weeks. It doesn't take five minutes. If this minister thinks it takes five minutes to get your ID together, that's outrageous. That's outrageous. Now several members from the opposite will harp in and chirp in and say oh no, not five. Maybe it's 10 minutes. It takes weeks. It takes months. It takes months to get their ID together, to get their ID together. Not at 7 o'clock, not at 7 o'clock, I've got to be at the voting station by 8 o'clock, not quarter to five. So this Justice minister, totally out of touch when he's talking about this kind of thing that it just takes five or six minutes or seven minutes. No, it takes more than seven minutes, more than seven minutes. More than seven minutes to do this kind of thing.

[16:45]

And of course, with that kind of attitude, and of course we see that attitude right across the government, particularly when I think about last spring when we were dealing with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, that kind of, we know best. We know best. Trust us. Trust us. We are consulted with everybody. We know what's going on. And we found that was not the case. That was not the case at all.

And here we have an issue around elections and how could they be better. Of course we're always being vigilant, always being vigilant about how we can make things better. But if there was ever a case of taking two steps back, this may be it. Now it may be tied with the human rights amendment Act because the human rights commission amendment Act, because I believe that one is four or five steps back. And I have to agree with the op-ed piece in *The StarPhoenix* a few weeks ago. And I've quoted from that, but where the president of Amnesty International talked about how you have to talk to people first and then put the Bill in, not the other way around. And I think this is a prime example, prime example of where we should have been talking to people. We should have been out talking to people, and not charging them 150 bucks either. But talking to people and saying, how can we make sure you get out to the polls? How can we do this better? How can we do this better? You know, how can we engage every person in this country who is a citizen? I think this is critical.

Talking to students, how can we make it more easily done for them? How can it make it, how can we make it easier for them, keeping the integrity in mind? We're not saying that everything's out the window, but we are saying we see a real problem with young people voting less and less and less, because they see the relevance and the actions of governments.

And whether it's the federal government, provincial government, we're all lumped in together and this is a real problem. This is a real problem. And so we need to talk to young people.

We need to talk to seniors. We need to very much talk to seniors about the whole issue around ID because we were seeing seniors . . . And you know the interesting thing, and I keep going back to the issue I believe is the biggest issue in Saskatchewan, people moving about. Because the answer from too many people, especially the government, if you don't like the rent, then move. And then what do you have for an address? What do you have for an address? Well don't move in the fall because that's election time. But they kind of would like to move in October because then your address would be all screwed up. Then you'd be back to square one, back to square one.

But with seniors this is a real issue. ID is something that they've, have grown accustomed to having ID, a pretty minimal amount of ID. Now we did some work around making sure seniors were able to get free ID, but that was an important thing. But you know, we could do better, so we need to consult with seniors.

And I got to tell you, we need to consult with young people and be bold about this. And how do we engage young people and not, not take this get your life together in five minutes approach, in five minutes and you'll have your life together. You know, I think that's like, what's that Minute Rice recipe? I think that you just get people or rice . . . We know there's a better way of doing it. We know there's a better way of doing it. And if ID is the issue, then we've got to make sure we address that as a separate issue because too many people are disenfranchised.

And we know for example, and I see from my notes that for example, homeless people, we may have as many as 2,200 of people who are homeless in Regina. And here we go with an issue that what is your fixed address? What is your fixed address? And this is a real problem, you know.

And we know that Métis and First Nations people were particularly disappointed about the consultations of this government. And we just, as I said earlier, talked about *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and not really talking to them and all of a sudden having this sprung on them. This is a real, real problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I want to conclude my remarks in a few minutes, but I do want to just reiterate some of the issues that I think are critical, that are critical. And I think that in Saskatchewan we have a system that we are very proud of, but we do think this is a step backwards. It's a system where you can have change in governments without the kind of things that we see in Africa, the issue over the weekend with Ivory Coast where you've had an election and essentially the president would not move on. And from what I understand from the news, he actually lost the election five years ago, but then lost again and wouldn't give up. And we can't have that kind of stuff happen.

I mean, we think that's far away and that can't happen here. But I tell you some of the things that we're seeing in the United

States makes us worried about how do you have a democratic process where you can allow change, but you can also allow reasonableness and not extreme swings from one side to the other where one government, where a government will take advantage of its majority and really step all over the rights of the minorities.

And this is what I worry about, is here we have a government that has a majority, truly will have its will because it is the majority. But really there is a responsibility when you have a majority to be sensitive to all, all members of society, to all members of society and to make sure that everyone is listened to. Not everyone will be happy. Not everyone will be happy, but everybody deserves the right to be heard and to be considered. It's important that they be considered.

And in this kind of format where we see Bills come forward like this that clearly have glaring concerns, glaring concerns, but we have some real challenges. And we have a minister who I say is out of touch with the challenges of people that . . . here in Saskatchewan and hasn't taken the opportunity, really, in a flippant way, a flippant way, dismiss many of their concerns whether it be about ID . . . I would rather be concerned about the integrity. Integrity's hugely important. I want to make sure that we all appreciate that.

But if there's one concern we all should have is the lack of participation in the democratic process. And you know, and I think back about the member's statement today about Vimy Ridge and of how important . . . We think about the battles, World War II, and I talked earlier about the Polish circumstance. And they weren't fighting over ID. They were fighting about the principle, the principle of democracy and making sure we're doing the right thing.

And we'll worry about the details. The details are critical. I'm not saying that we dismiss details. Very important that we have the details right. But we have to make sure we focus on the principles of democracy, and that is that everyone has the right to vote, no matter their circumstance. And this obsession about a fixed address . . . If there's a way that we can make things work a little smoother, like I said, about the issues about the shelter is one that's important to me, where you could have somebody vouching for more than one person.

Of course it's not just shelters, as I said. It could be families. It could be families who find themselves in that odd position that all of a sudden on Monday, November 7th, somebody's come home for the weekend, thought they'd vote. Maybe on the weekend, go to the advance poll and they find out, no you're out of luck because you forgot your ID back in Regina or Moose Jaw, where ever you're at, you know. And so I think that . . . and that's how people get discouraged, grow cynical is because they say, do I, do I really matter? Well I think in democracy everyone matters. Each, each citizen matters.

Collectively we make the decision, and there are no wrong decisions by individuals because we need to have everybody's input. And I find too many times young people are feeling that way, that they've been discounted and they don't want to make the wrong decision. They just say, I'd rather, I'd just rather pass. I'd just rather pass. And I think that's a failure on all our part.

And as I say, Mr. Speaker, I'll be looking forward to the results next year, of course, on one level. I know the Minister of Justice said that there may be changes coming when he answered in question period. There may be changes. We look forward to big changes in this Chamber next year. But the one result I'll be looking forward to is, in the poll books, will they be marking how many people were turned away? How many people showed up to vote, but how many people will be turned away?

So we'll have those questions for sure next spring because we'll be looking to see when the Chief Electoral Officer files his report, because it's in the Act. And I think this is critical. How many people were turned away? And we'll be looking at that seriously because we'll be looking at the voter participation rate. Has it gone down? And is that an unacceptable number?

We want to see that number turn around. We want to see it go up. We want to see it go up because we know when people turn out to vote — and this is a reflection of our communities — we know when the numbers go down, we all kind of like to think it's a reflection that we're all doing a good job, but you know I don't think we can all rest easy on our laurels. We have to gauge . . . we have to talk to people. We have to talk to everybody. And sometimes we have to talk to people we don't really want to talk to, but we have to hear people. And we may not agree. We may not agree, but we all learn from everyone.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do think that, as I said earlier, I think it would be just easier to pull this and start over again. I know the minister has said the Chief Electoral Officer will be busy. Why add something that really isn't necessary at this point? I mean, I don't even know why we're talking about this because I don't know where the issue was that said we have to do this, we have to do this. If there was anything we had to do, if there was anything we have to do, it is to get the voter participation rate up among young people. That is a crisis. That is the crisis of the day.

And I can talk about other issues I have about the election process, but now it's the time . . . And I was able to talk on the other Bill that is parallel to this. But at this point, I think that I have made my case today and I know the member from Regina Rosemont has made his case. And we think that the best case scenario is just to pull this. Pull it. Pull it now. And then when you get on to other issues like amending *The Residential Tenancies Act* so we can have something else that Ontario, Quebec, and BC [British Columbia] have . . . I know they have photo ID, but it's important to have some other things. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn this debate. Thank you very much.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to adjourn the House so that we can go to committees this

evening.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that the House do now adjourn to facilitate the working of committees. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.]

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