



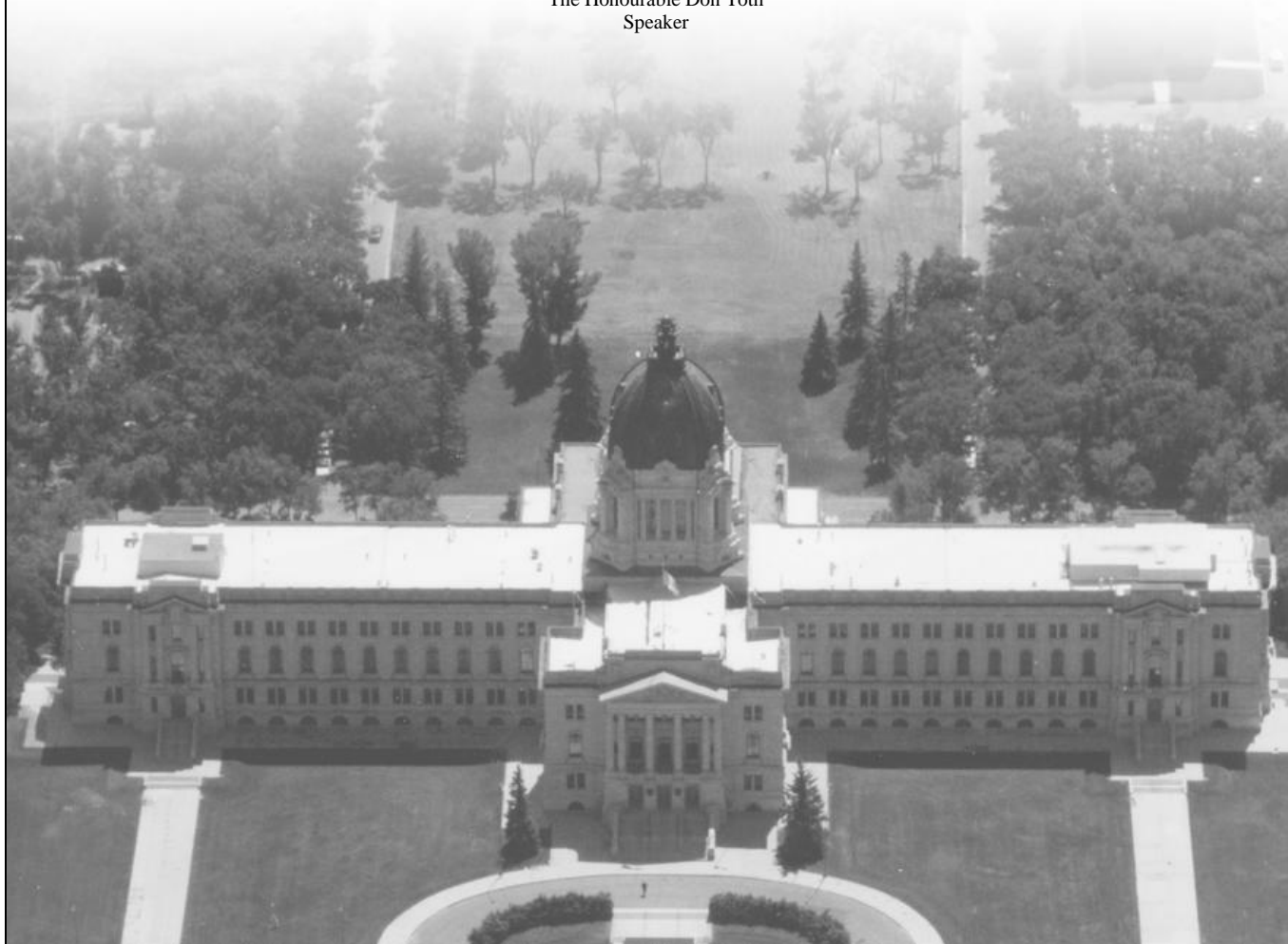
FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

Clerk: — Members, it's my duty to inform you that Mr. Speaker will not be present today to open today's sitting.

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my honour today to introduce two very special groups of people. And not in a random order, I'm going to . . . It is my pleasure to introduce Don Stevenson. Don is the director of government's employee and family assistance plan. He's in your gallery today. And along with him is Don Wincherauk, who is the Chair and the deputy minister of the Public Service Commission, and Karen Aulie.

This week Don is retiring after 37 years of public service. He's seen the important program that he started that focused on helping employees with alcohol dependency to a provision of a lot wider span of supports for people in the public service. Through his work, he has touched the lives of more than 16,000 employees. This important role Don has played has spanned several administrations, and he's been supporting managers and debriefing employees after critical incidents in times of trauma.

Don has a commitment to the public service and a huge sense of humour that everybody appreciates, and his quality service has been recognized by the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Public Service. I'd also like to share the fact that Don is a practising magician, and it's probably helped him through 37 years of work with the public service.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to miss Don. And I know that he's leaving the program in great hands; his colleague Lynda Bankley will take over. So I'm asking all members in the House to thank Don for his years of service, and I'm sure you're going to enjoy your retirement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I'd also like to welcome representatives from the Silver Sage Housing to this legislature. We had an opportunity to meet with them earlier. And everyone, I'm sure, is going to recognize Maynard Sonntag, a colleague in the legislature. We had a chance to talk about housing, and I'm happy to report that they're going to be attending next week's housing summit. Silver Sage was sponsored by Sask Housing to attend that summit.

Silver Sage has a long history of providing affordable housing for First Nations in our province. They own approximately 450 units in Regina and some in Fort Qu'Appelle at this time. And I'm really proud to say that currently they're working on a townhouse-style affordable housing project in Swift Current.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask everyone to appreciate the people that

are in the gallery today and welcome to your legislature.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister and welcome a very special guest to our Assembly, Mr. Don Stevenson. Don has had a long and distinguished career in the public service of Saskatchewan, and I've had the opportunity to know and work with Don for many, many years prior to my being elected to this legislature. And I know first hand that Don has served the people of Saskatchewan and the various public servants of our province with great distinction.

Don is the type of individual that will always give you 110 per cent. You don't have to worry about whether Don is going to be there when he is needed. He has worked hard to develop an EFAP program, an employee and family assistance program, in the Government of Saskatchewan that I think is first-rate. And I can remember the early days as we were discussing what that program would look like some, about 20 years ago now or a little more than that when we first put that joint program in place.

And Don is, as indicated, is also a magician and has some wonderful tricks that he could teach or pull on any one of us. And he's always the type of person you like to be around, and I heard that from civil servants for many, many years. And it is a loss to the civil service of Saskatchewan that Don has chosen to retire, but I'm sure that he will move on in life and contribute greatly to our community and to the city of Regina. So thank you very much, Don, for your service. And on behalf of all of us, I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming you to your Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly I've got three individuals I'd like to introduce. First is Kale Derksen — if you'd just give a quick wave — and J.C. Lipon. Kale is a student out of Notre Dame and plays with the SJHL [Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League] Hounds. And J.C. is from Regina. They're both from Regina. J.C. plays in Kamloops with the Blazers. Made it when he was 16; played for two years already; has done amazing. And the third is my son, Mark McMorris, who we'll maybe hear a little bit about after. But I would say that Mark hangs around with some pretty good athletes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask all members to welcome them here.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with those welcoming the folks from Silver Sage to their Legislative Assembly. We've had a good meeting this morning. And this is of course part of their professional development series and gaining a better understanding of the different issues that affect their lives. They're doing great work on the front lines of delivering housing, have been doing so since 1983, and are an

endeavour incorporated under the aegis of Touchwood Agency and File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council.

Mr. Speaker, of course they're joined with their general manager, Maynard Sonntag. And after distinguished service to the people of Saskatchewan from 1991 to 2007, I'm really glad to see Maynard in this Legislative Assembly again and wish the seat was a little different of course, but that's the way it goes. But I am very glad to see that he's continuing his service to the people of Saskatchewan on such an important front in terms of working with First Nations and Métis people and on the vital issue of housing. But it's been good visiting with Rick and Tina and Delbert and the folks with Silver Sage. So I would join with those welcoming the people from Silver Sage to their Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On behalf of the member for Cypress Hills, it's an honour to introduce to you and through you a group of students from Gull Lake School. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 19 grade 4 and 13 grade 12 students who have joined us today in the west gallery. They're accompanied by their teachers, Adele Kirwan and Neal Boutin. And they also have a large group of chaperones, although kids from the Southwest typically don't need a lot of chaperones. Em Zanidean, Delee Linsley, Tracey Trapp, Doug Logan, Mel Leppa, Lynette Butts, Deb Willis, Delores Klink, Al Penner and Keith McCarty have joined us, Mr. Speaker.

I'll look forward to meeting with the students after question period. We'll chat a little bit about what went on here and what didn't go on here . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And no, to the member for Kindersley, I don't think it's my job to buy the kids a Blizzard. That's the responsibility of the member for Cypress Hills. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to welcome these students to their Legislative Assembly today.

And while I'm on my feet, I do want to join with the Minister of Health in introducing one of Saskatchewan's most famous athletes. I want to welcome Mark. I'll have a chance to say a little bit about him here in a minute. But Mark McMorris is ranked fourth overall in the TTR [Ticket To Ride] world tour — world tour — and he's second overall in slope style, Mr. Speaker. More on that in a moment. Welcome, Mark. Welcome home, and it's good to have you here today.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to take a few minutes to recognize the folks from Silver Sage Housing, but in particular another individual that I also want to recognize. Since we were talking about hockey players and athletes in general, I'd like to recognize Maynard Sonntag. And maybe the players that play in the junior leagues right now should know that Maynard played 17 games with Boston in the late '80s — Boston Pizza out of P.A. [Prince Albert]. He was a third-line centre and he got cut. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to recognize Maynard who has done an incredible job not only in sporting development but certainly with the Assembly here.

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

So translation in my Cree language is that I'm glad they are here. As Aboriginal people, they have nothing to fear. This is our House as well as it's anybody's House, and I want to make a special recognition to all the Aboriginal people that are here with Silver Sage Housing. And keep up the fantastic work. Thank you very much.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan tenants that are facing surging rental increases that are simply making life in Saskatchewan unaffordable. And it recognizes also that the majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines including Manitoba, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island. Mr. Speaker, it also points out that in rent-controlled Winnipeg, they have generated more new rental units than in Regina and Saskatoon. From the years 2007 to 2009, CMHC [Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation] data shows that there were fewer than 300 rental unit starts in Saskatchewan's two largest cities combined, and during that same period, Winnipeg with their rent controls has generated over 1,500 new rental units, Mr. Speaker. And the prayers 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 increases in rent.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed from citizens in Carlyle, Regina, Saskatoon, Yellow Grass, Kindersley, Weyburn, Lloydminster, Mervin, and Prince Albert. I so present.

The Deputy 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 here in Saskatchewan. And we know that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations and that all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. We also know that in Saskatchewan the income gap between the rich and poor continues to grow, and now one in five children in Saskatchewan live in deepening poverty. And we know citizens who are living in poverty have long identified workable, affordable solutions. 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.

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

I do so present. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition concerning the need of hospice and palliative care here in Saskatchewan.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that all Saskatchewan people deserve quality end-of-life and bereavement care; that hospice and palliative care is known to help enhance the quality of life for those facing advancing illness, death, and bereavement; that a publicly funded and administered hospice and palliative care system including residential hospices would increase end-of-life care options for Saskatchewan people.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to enhance and increase publicly funded and administered hospice and palliative care including in-home hospice services and residential hospices in order to ensure that all Saskatchewan people have access to high-quality end-of-life care.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the constituency of Saskatoon Massey Place. I so present.

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition in support of a potash royalty review because, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are owners of a thousand-year resource, a strategic supply of this resource. And the owners of this potash resource deserve the maximum possible benefit from the resource. And the petition is also being circulated, Mr. Speaker, because this government has flatly rejected looking at royalties for the next 16 years, Mr. Speaker, and the CEO [chief executive officer] of one of the potash companies in Saskatchewan has said that there's a new norm for potash in Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to begin a comprehensive, transparent, and public review of Saskatchewan's royalty system with a view to maximizing the return from this strategic resource for its owners, the people of Saskatchewan, who wish to use these additional potash royalty revenues for needed investments in health care, child care, education, affordable housing, infrastructure, and other social programs as well as public initiatives such as debt repayment.

Mr. Speaker, today's petition is signed by folks from Balcarres, Raymore, Fort Qu'Appelle, Lumsden, and Buena Vista. I so present.

[13:45]

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

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

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

Today the petition is signed by residents of Regina and Stoughton, Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the record that includes a significant increasing of debt and a running of deficits at a period of time of record highs in revenues in this province, Mr. Speaker. And despite having record highs in revenues, we're not paying down debt. In fact we're adding debt, Mr. Speaker — \$1.3 billion over the last three years, and this year alone debt increasing by \$548 million, Mr. Speaker. 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 Regina, Lumsden, and Grenfell. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

National Volunteer Week

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. April 10th to the 16th is National Volunteer Week. There's no better place in Canada to see the power of volunteerism at work than right here in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan's spirit of volunteerism is renowned far beyond our own borders. We are recognized for our extraordinarily high rate of volunteering, and those visiting Saskatchewan have been

astounded by the volunteer-driven events that we have hosted. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our province's successful events include the Scotties Tournament of Hearts, the Brier, the Grey Cup, last year's World Junior Hockey Championship, and of course most recently a very successful world curling championships.

Volunteers are active in all Saskatchewan communities. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of our sports coaches and youth mentors are volunteers. Our neighbours who shovel seniors' walks or help buy them groceries are volunteers. Additionally Saskatchewan's volunteers help to raise millions of dollars every year for many worthwhile causes. We all know who they are, and no doubt each and every one of us and our families have benefited from their goodwill. Volunteer Week highlights these contributions and encourages all of us to think about how we can help as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the thousands of people working day and night to fill sandbags and take extraordinary measures in order to protect their neighbours and communities from the flooding that is and may occur over the next few weeks from this spring's thaw. To each and every volunteer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you. You all make Saskatchewan truly a greater province. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Day of Pink

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is the Day of Pink, the International Day against Bullying, Homophobia and Discrimination in schools and communities. The Day of Pink is a day of action, a day to assert in the clearest and boldest of ways that bullying and discrimination on any grounds are not acceptable in our society.

The idea of a Day of Pink began when a youth in high school in Cambridge, Nova Scotia was bullied because he wore a pink shirt to school. His fellow students decided to stand up to the bullying. Hundreds of students came to the school wearing pink to show support by diversity and tolerance and for stopping discrimination and bullying. Since then people across Canada and beyond have joined together to make the Day of Pink a truly grassroots movement for social justice and equality.

Here in Saskatchewan, the Avenue Community Centre in Saskatoon is spearheading many of the activities with thousands of school students and community residents participating across the province. Tonight some of my colleagues and I will be attending a Day of Pink rally in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, today the opposition caucus is pleased and proud to participate in Day of Pink activities. We call on all members of the legislature to support the Day of Pink and truly progressive support of human rights in our activities today and every day.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Celebrating A Saskatchewan Snowboarder

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise in the Assembly today and speak for just a short

period of time about a very special young individual who's joined us in the gallery today. Mark McMorris has been representing the country, frankly, and the province of Saskatchewan all over the world.

Mark is born in Saskatchewan. He is a professional snowboarder who is receiving a lot of international accolades and recognition. He has got a number of aerial moves that he's very well known for including the double cork, but on the 2nd of March, 2011, Mark became the first to ever land the backside triple cork 1440. That's right. And all members are very familiar with that move.

Just this season alone on the Dew Tour — that's the Mountain Dew tour — Mark has been all over the podium in competition. He claims second place in Breckenridge, Colorado, third in January snowboard slopestyle competition in Kellington, Vermont. And, Mr. Speaker, at this year's Winter X-games, Mark managed to capture the silver medal. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for those of us who got a chance to watch on NBC [National Broadcasting Company] and other well-known networks, it's kind of surreal to see someone that we know reasonably well, doing that well and being talked about by commentators from all over the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mark is demonstrating that you don't have to be from the mountains to be very proficient, to be a world leader in this sport. He makes us all proud, and frankly, he's a bit of an entrepreneur. He's got a number of sponsors now. So if you'll permit the Legislative Assembly to help him, I think we want to mention Red Bull, Burton, DFS [Dollars for Skiing/Snowboarding], and Matix so that other corporate sponsors come on board with one of Saskatchewan's best success stories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

La Ronge's Ice Wolves Win Credit Union Cup

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, La Ronge Ice Wolves hockey team won the Credit Union Cup in the final game of a seven-game series played in La Ronge in front a packed house. They captured a 3 to 1 win against the Yorkton Terriers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, La Ronge Ice Wolves repeated last year's achievement of winning the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League Credit Union Cup and now will represent Saskatchewan in Anavet Cup in a seven-game series against Portage Terriers. The series will begin this weekend, April the 15th, with the first two games played at the PC Centre in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the winning team of the Anavet Cup will advance to play for the 2011 Royal Bank Cup championship in Camrose, Alberta later this month.

The team spirit shown by both fans and volunteer staff is truly amazing. These fans and volunteers make it easier for Coach Bob Beatty and his staff to focus on preparing the players. Their support is key to motivate the team and strengthen our community. The easiest way to motivate a team is through fan support, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ice will certainly have that. With every goal scored, by the fans fish are thrown onto the ice. I hope the fans get to throw many fish to feed the

wolves.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the La Ronge Ice Wolves for their victory last night. And we wish them all the best as they try to win the Anavet Cup. Go get 'em, Wolves.

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

Regina Chamber of Commerce Paragon Awards

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was indeed an honour for the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley and I to attend the Regina Chamber of Commerce Paragon Awards last Thursday.

The room was filled to capacity with outstanding business leaders that have contributed to our strong economy and are key figures in helping drive this province forward. Regina's business community includes some of the best business leaders you will find anywhere in the world. One of those leaders, Mr. Gavin Semple, was recognized as an individual who has had significant long-term business success and continually supports our community. Gavin was the recipient of the prestigious Regina Chamber of Commerce Award of Distinction, an award only given out twice before in the 100-plus year chamber history.

The Paragon Awards are an opportunity for all of us to acknowledge the hard work, the influence, and the importance of all nominees. It's always wonderful to celebrate businesses that are creating employment, expanding capacity, and creating economic opportunity that leads to prosperity in our province. However, I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being from Saskatoon, I am always happy to toast Regina businesses, but when a Regina city councillor heckled me from the crowd and said, go Rams, I thought that was a bit much.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking President Victor Thomas and the Regina Chamber of Commerce for organizing a fantastic event honouring the deserving recipients of the 2011 Paragon Awards.

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

Highway 378

Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, I recently attended a meeting of community leaders who reside and work north of The Battlefords, who want the provincial government to know that local residents, tourists, truckers, parents, and business owners have reason to be concerned about the deteriorating condition of Highway No. 378. This is a 110-kilometre thin-membraned, very narrow road joining Spiritwood, Rabbit Lake, and Whitkow to North Battleford. There are no heavy-haul roads or super grids serving the area. There are no functioning hospitals in this area, which means that Highway 378 is a crucial link to health care. And more than 100 students from 11 different schools travel Highway 378 on a daily basis.

Members of the 378 Highway improvement committee include

official representatives from the RM [rural municipality] of Meeting Lake, the RM of Spiritwood, the RM of Round Hill, the RM of North Battleford, the town of Rabbit Lake, and the town of Spiritwood. A representative of the Rabbit Lake Board of Trade and a representative of The Battlefords Chamber of Commerce also participated in that information meeting.

Mr. Speaker, Highway 378 is an important transportation route in northwest Saskatchewan that requires immediate attention. This narrow road with no shoulders and broken pavement is not only unsafe, but it presents a barrier to economic activity in the region. I call on the Minister of Highways to instruct his officials to begin planning to upgrade Highway 378 immediately.

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

Remembering Gary Hyland

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday the city of Moose Jaw lost one of its most influential citizens with the passing of Gary Hyland. Gary Hyland was a poet and a publisher and was probably the best known as founder of the Saskatchewan Festival of Words, a celebration of the imaginative use of the language which is held annually in Moose Jaw.

Gary Hyland taught English at Riverview Collegiate from 1964 to 1994. His passion for literature influenced hundreds of students, developing in them the love of reading and writing. The library of Riverview Collegiate has been dedicated to the name of Gary Hyland.

In addition to teaching and writing poetry, Gary Hyland edited books and helped build many organizations including Coteau Books. It was Gary Hyland who was instrumental in the creation of the Moose Jaw Culture Centre. Gary Hyland was honoured with a life-time Poet Laureate with Robert Currie. He was named to the Order of Canada and held an honorary doctorate of literature degree at the University of Regina. He was chosen Citizen of the Year twice in Moose Jaw and was named as one of the 100 most influential graduates of the University of Saskatchewan in the last 100 years.

Gary Hyland was a man who was loved and appreciated by many and will be missed by the citizens of Moose Jaw and the cultural community of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Natural Gas System

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week there was an explosion at 1004 Shannon Road here in Regina and a number of fires also at other residences in the area in south Regina. In fact, two family members were sent to hospital as a result of the explosion and one of the houses is completely destroyed.

My question is to the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy. My

question is this: is it the responsibility of Sask Energy to protect families who are connected to the gas lines in this province? And if so, what is the minister doing and has he done in the last couple of days to ensure that families in Regina and across the province are protected as a result of leaks that are occurring in this province to the gas lines?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let me first begin by expressing the government's concern for those that have been affected by this incident, particularly those that were . . . suffered physical injuries but also to all of those that call that neighbourhood their home, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the people of this province that the women and men of SaskEnergy, from the board of directors to the executive management to the staff, take the public safety of the people that they serve as well as the integrity of the gas system as their highest priority, Mr. Speaker. That's why in this incident, Sask Energy officials are working very closely with the fire department to determine not only what the preliminary cause was, which was identified a couple of days ago, but also to ensure that there is follow-up work to be done to determine what the specific cause of this particular incident was.

[14:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — The incident wasn't isolated. There were a number of leaks and a number of fires at that time, 60 families were evacuated, and yesterday there were a number of other reported leaks in south Regina.

My question to the minister is this, that we're also receiving reports that when gas leaks are reported, that the wait time has increased from one hour to three hours. And I want to ask the minister very clearly: is it in fact due in part to the fact of cutbacks in the area of inspection that the wait times are longer and that in fact families are being put at risk because of cutbacks in that area?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. On this specific incident that took place in Regina, Mr. Speaker, it would be too early for me to speculate on what the exact cause of this incident was, Mr. Speaker. That's why SaskEnergy officials are working very closely with the fire department and other officials to determine what the cause was, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member that in the province of Saskatchewan where, areas where SaskEnergy does provide service, that call times are done very efficiently in terms of responding to those calls. That certainly was the case when there was an issue that was reported to SaskEnergy. SaskEnergy officials were on the scene in a very short order.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the issue of wait time is hugely important because the number of hours or even minutes that it takes the gas company to get to check meters, gas lines, or furnaces to see where the leak is occurring can be the difference between injury and loss of property, and the worst-case scenario could be even worse than that.

But my question to the minister is this: why would he be surprised if in fact there are cutbacks to service when last year the corporation had to give back to the treasury 100 per cent of the profits that allowed them little, if any, money to repair, upgrade, rebuild infrastructure? Can the minister make a commitment that this year that that practice of taking 100 per cent of the profits from SaskEnergy will end and in fact monies should be left and will be left in the corporation to carry out inspection and repair to our gas system in the province to protect families?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important to know that in this past year it wasn't 100 per cent dividend that was taken from SaskEnergy; it was 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker. As well in 2010, the system-wide investment in safety, in the functions such as pipeline integrity, were in excess of \$30 million. That is on par for what it has been over a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

I can also tell the member that in fact since this government took office in late 2007, the workforce of SaskEnergy has grown by over 70 FTEs [full-time equivalent], Mr. Speaker, so there has not been a reduction in the FTEs. And I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan that from the board and the management and the staff of SaskEnergy and this government, the 1,100 employees of the corporation including the 450 individuals that work in, the technical people that work in ensuring the integrity of the gas system, Mr. Speaker, that we take this issue very seriously.

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

College Merger

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday when pressed by the media following question period, the Minister of Advanced Education kept talking about how gaps existed which allowed an individual convicted of fraud to be in charge of the government's college merger project and millions of taxpayers' dollars. But the minister did not define what those gaps are, and he simply ducked behind his deputy minister.

Well there is no deputy minister for him to hide behind in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, so my question to the minister: what are the gaps he was referring to yesterday?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much. I think what's important here is to begin with the context. And the context, as quoted from the *Canadian University Guide* 2011 edition, is there's never been a better time to consider Saskatchewan as the place to attain a great post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. We know how important this is, Mr. Speaker, for students right across the province.

The members opposite are making specific reference to a case, Mr. Speaker, where there was a proposal that came forward, Mr. Speaker. That was last June; we know that. Mr. Speaker, we had an independent process that came forward. That independent process recommended that there would be no merger. We acted on that, Mr. Speaker. There are also a number of outstanding questions, Mr. Speaker. We know how important those are to follow up. That follow-up is under way. That follow-up is under way, Mr. Speaker, because we are going to account to the taxpayers or the people of this province as well as to the students, Mr. Speaker, because their well-being and success in the classroom is what's first and foremost. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has admitted that he received a fax as early as last May about Glen Kobussen's history of defrauding the Saskatchewan firefighters' burn fund. We learned from his deputy minister yesterday that the minister never even shared that fax with her. All the deputy heard were rumours that Kobussen may have a criminal past, but she didn't know the details because the minister didn't take it seriously enough to actually give her the fax that he received. But he still chose to leave his deputy minister in the rotunda yesterday to answer questions on this issue as he ran away and hid in the government lounge.

To the minister: how exactly were his officials supposed to follow up on serious concerns about his pet merger project when he withheld important information from them?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know the talks began while the members opposite were actually in power, Mr. Speaker. That's important. Mr. Speaker, what we also know, what we also know, Mr. Speaker, is that Glen Kobussen served as a CEO at St. Peter's College, served at St. Peter's College in 2004-2005 and in 2006 became a special adviser to the board, Mr. Speaker. We know the significance of this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we can say is that, Mr. Speaker, we know how important this is that the members opposite worked with this individual. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are records, Mr. Speaker, of members opposite actually meeting with this individual. Mr. Speaker, there have been a series of accusations to date, only a series of accusations, Mr. Speaker. These accusations are being tracked down, Mr. Speaker. We are doing that through a number of independent audit processes and we're going to make all of these processes and the conclusions presented to the people of the public. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we have a minister here. He will cut a ribbon on a project; he will deliver a partisan speech. But when it comes to answering questions, he runs away to the members' lounge to drink a Diet Coke and to simply lick his wounds, Mr. Speaker. This is a sad, sad excuse for ministerial responsibility.

It's interesting that the minister received at least two emails last May. Neither of those reached his officials and nothing was done. The minister received a fax about Glen Kobussen's history of fraud. He didn't share that with his officials either, and nothing was done.

So the minister cannot blame his officials for this. He withheld information from them and they were just carrying out his wishes with respect to his pet merger project. His deputy said yesterday that officials didn't look into concerns about the fraud history because "we were thinking about the proposed merger." Yet the minister is content to toss his deputy under the bus because for him, ministerial responsibility apparently means self-preservation at all costs.

To the minister: yesterday he was talking about gaps that allowed this mess to happen. Will he admit today that the main gap is his complete lack of responsibility and accountability?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, this government has invested more than \$2.8 billion in post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. We've also tried to pay particular attention to rural communities, Mr. Speaker. For example, when a couple of communities came forward and suggested that a couple of regional colleges actually come together, we said, let's try that. That successfully led to Great Plains, Mr. Speaker. We know how important that is in the Southwest.

Mr. Speaker, talks had begun while the members opposite were in office. What we said is, let's make sure there is due diligence. Let's make sure there's a process. Let's make sure that we can be at once responsive to the voices of communities, Mr. Speaker, and responsible to taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

We set up an independent process, Mr. Speaker. We followed the recommendations of that process. And Mr. Speaker, in following up, we now are undertaking a series of audits, Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that these allegations, these questions, and these suggestions and rumours, Mr. Speaker, that we track down all public dollars, Mr. Speaker. That process is under way, and that process is going to lead to conclusions that will be made public.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this situation, this merger mess of the minister is very disturbing and so are his answers today, Mr. Speaker. This is a textbook case of path dependency. The minister wanted his pet merger project to happen, and he

funneled a whole lot of public money toward it. So when serious concerns were raised with him, he ignored them and did not share them with his officials. And when everything blew up, the minister just started tossing everybody under the bus.

He fired every single board member of the Carlton Trail board, even those who tried to address concerns. He blamed his political staff for not showing him the emails that were sent to his office. And yesterday he left his deputy minister to answer the tough questions as he ran back to the safety of the government lounge. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, there is no one left to throw under the bus. So to the minister: will he finally take responsibility for this mess and will he resign from his position until this whole situation is properly dealt with?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I take responsibility for the work that's under way. I take responsibility for making the right decision. I take responsibility, Mr. Speaker, for ensuring that there was an independent process.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I was talking to a gentleman from . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm having trouble hearing the minister. I would ask the members to allow the minister to answer the question. Order.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I was just speaking to an elderly gentleman, a senior citizen in Humboldt the other day and he said a few things about responsibility, Mr. Speaker. He said, Mr. Speaker, this, and quite clearly, he said, there are a number of rumours out there. We want to make sure those are cleared up. Secondly, we need to track and ensure that those public dollars are accounted for. And, Mr. Speaker, he said, let the chips fall where they may. Mr. Speaker, that's a definition that ministerial responsibility is in alignment with, Mr. Speaker. We're going to find out where those dollars are, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to let the chips fall where they may. To date they're only rumours.

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

Reporting Political Donations

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. The minister has confirmed that he is a member of the Enterprise Club, the Sask Party's exclusive \$1,000 a year membership club.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also knows that we've sent a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer requesting an investigation into the Sask Party's failure to disclose contributions made in their annual report for the year the contribution was made, as required by law.

Given the minister's involvement in Enterprise Club and his cavalier disregard for *The Election Act*, will he confirm today

that he will enable the Chief Electoral Officer to send the file out of province to independent counsel to review and determine if *The Election Act* has been breached?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer. If he chooses to send the file out of the province to have it investigated, he can. If he chooses to involve the officials of the Ministry of Justice, they will do that without my knowledge, and that will happen in the ordinary and usual course. And, Mr. Speaker, it was, I understand, the practice that was followed by the previous administration and it is certainly the practice of this administration, and we expect and hope that it has always been the practice of the members of this House to ensure that things are put under proper and acceptable scrutiny.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise you that the member goes on and on about whether a contribution was disclosed in 2009 or 2010. It has always been the practice of the Saskatchewan Party to ensure that things are disclosed.

There is a statutory process under *The Political Contributions Tax Credit Act*, which goes into great detail how it's calculated. It involves the number of tickets sold, the expenses holding a function. It's section 7 of that Act. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd ask the member opposite to have a look at that section and find out how he could possibly determine how much an eligible tax credit is until after an event has been held, Mr. Speaker. It is common sense and practicality.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, in the normal course of action when the Chief Electoral Officer asks for a review of a file he would request Department of Justice lawyers to investigate and of course that would come as no cost to the Chief Electoral office. Mr. Speaker, in the case of the \$1,000 per year Enterprise Club contributions, the Minister of Justice is a member of the exclusive club. It's a conflict of interest to have the Minister of Justice lawyers investigating the membership of the Minister of Justice.

To the minister: in order to avoid a conflict of interest and to assure complete transparency and accountability, will he ensure that the Chief Electoral office has the resources to send this file out of province for independent legal counsel for investigation?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, there will never be a shortage of resources to ensure that investigations are thoroughly and completely done under this government. And I'd like to tell you something else, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have never turned down a request from the Chief Electoral Officer for funding. We've always worked with that office to ensure that they are adequately and appropriately staffed.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is this: all contributions to the Saskatchewan Party over \$250 are disclosed. They always have

been; they always will.

In contrast, Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] got caught not disclosing millions worth of ticket sales to their events. Between 2001 and 2006, the NDP failed to disclose over two and a half million dollars worth of contributions through ticket sales. Mr. Speaker, those people bought tickets, they did not get a tax credit, but worst of all, Mr. Speaker, their identity was not disclosed. They were in direct . . . [inaudible] . . . of that Act for years, between 2001 and 2006. In fact, Mr. Speaker, under this party everything is disclosed. We do it properly, we do it right, and we'll always do that.

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

Mr. Quennell: — I'm sure the Acting Chief Electoral Officer is well aware of the support he has from Saskatchewan Party government members, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009 Mr. Glen Kobussen made a \$1,000 contribution to the Sask Party, paid for by St. Peter's College. That was not disclosed in the Sask Party's annual report for the year it was received. The minister, who is a member of the Enterprise Club, said he was in possession of an interpretation bulletin from the Chief Electoral Officer saying that the Saskatchewan Party can deduct fundraising activities and expenses from contributions a year later before disclosing them and disclose them for a different fiscal year than the year they were contributed. But apparently he has no such interpretation bulletin.

There's a tradition in Saskatchewan for sending these matters out of province to independent legal counsel for review. To the minister: will he confirm that he will follow that tradition and send this matter out of province for independent legal counsel?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have chosen to make a complaint to the Chief Electoral Officer. That was done at the end of last month. It is certainly their right to do that. We will ensure that that complaint goes ahead and is dealt with appropriately. We will be absolutely hands-off.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an independent officer of this House. I will not interfere with his independence. His requests for resources are always dealt with appropriately, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It will happen.

Unlike the NDP that spent five years hiding millions of dollars worth of contributions, ours are disclosed. The issue is whether they're filed in 2009, 2010 and to comply with the legislation. In fact past, in the year 2001 . . . I'm not saying who was in government at that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we will comply with that Act and we will comply with the legislation scrupulously and carefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the practice of this government; that is the practice of this party — unlike the \$2.5 million that they just conveniently swept away so they didn't have to disclose who their friends were, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose

Jaw Wakamow.

Arrangements for Office Space

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Wow, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lack of government transparency when it comes to the new Regina office tower, or as it's being known by some as taxpayers' tower, has raised numerous questions.

When it was announced, the new Regina tower was heralded as being a headquarters for a large corporation. But those head offices will only take up a couple of floors. In turn the Government of Saskatchewan, as was determined last week in estimates, will be leasing 50 to 60,000 square feet or five to six floors of space. That's more space than any other tenant. So if this is going to be named after the main tenant, it's only fitting that it be called the taxpayer tower, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why was this minister not upfront with Saskatchewan people that the Government of Saskatchewan is going to be the major tenant in this office tower?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member opposite has stated that in fact the Government of Saskatchewan is the major tenant in that building. In fact we are not. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister has been talking about the fact that a company will be moving its head office into the downtown Regina tower. But where is . . . But, Mr. Speaker, where are the jobs coming from? Are they coming from Calgary? Are they coming from Winnipeg or Vancouver? No. They're coming from Belle Plaine, Mr. Speaker. But even then, that company is not a major tenant. We are.

And this government, at a time when they have committed to reducing the civil service, cannot even justify the need for 50 to 60,000 square feet of very expensive office space. And on top of that, they have committed Saskatchewan taxpayers to this lease for 20 years without being told why. Can the minister now clear the air and give the people who are going to be paying this bill for the next 20 years the actual cost and details of the lease?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we've done is we've scanned the country to see what is done in other jurisdictions. And the Western provinces handle lease agreements like Saskatchewan. They do not disclose the detail of their lease arrangements. And our review of Saskatchewan past practices indicate that this approach has been used for over 40 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of a sudden the members of the opposite say that we should throw out best practice and the

reason for best practice. The members opposite say they did . . . they may have done it that way but maybe they were wrong. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we in Saskatchewan were going to go in a different direction, we would need thoughtful consideration and consultation with industry before we made any changes.

Unless the opposition has changed their approach on this as well, I seem to recall them strongly advocating for consultation prior to making changes. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, here is the minister standing on her feet and justifying making a decision on an office tower that commits the taxpayers of Saskatchewan to a long-term, expensive lease for 20 years. They have no plan on who moves into the building. They have not released any details.

The Premier was at the photo shoot. Man, we wouldn't want him to miss turning the sod and getting his picture taken, for heaven's sakes. But he fails to mention that the Government of Saskatchewan was going to be a major tenant in that building. And the minister stands and defends her decision saying, well it's been done this way for 40 years. This is the new Saskatchewan? Well excuse me, Mr. Speaker; it's not.

The minister, the minister and this . . . The minister and this Premier owe an explanation to the taxpayers of this province. People in this day and age expect transparency. They expect accountability. Will that minister release the details?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now I don't know about you, but I think that most of us on this side of the House are pretty excited to see a new head office being located in downtown Regina. I'm not sure, but it seems that the NDP are not excited and not pleased that new offices are being located here. New head offices are choosing to locate here . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'm having trouble hearing the answer. I would ask the member or the Minister of Government Services to continue with the answer.

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to be fairly apparent that in fact the NDP do not want to see this province move forward. They don't want more head offices here. They don't want to see more jobs here in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan under the, under the Saskatchewan government is pleased to see new head offices here, is to see more people choose to locate here. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, during question period, the minister for government . . . Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The

Minister of Government Services was reading directly from a note or a piece of paper or a document, Mr. Speaker. We request that document be tabled.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I would ask, I would leave it up to the minister if she believes it's either a briefing note or if it was a quote. If it's up to her . . . Order. Order. I will leave that up to the minister right now. If not, if you want to press it, I will ask to look at it and then let the Clerk decide whether it's an item to be tabled.

Mr. Yates: — I stood on a point of order . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. If it's a letter, I would ask the minister to table it. If it's a briefing note, she doesn't have to. I would ask the minister to clarify whether it's a briefing note or a letter she was quoting from.

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was a briefing note. It was not a letter.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Culture.

Main Street Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to stand today to inform the Assembly of a very exciting new program being introduced by my ministry. Mr. Speaker, we have heard our Premier speak about the new road that Saskatchewan is on. I can say today that this new road will start on Main Street for four Saskatchewan communities.

Last year, Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport introduced a cultural policy called Pride of Saskatchewan, a policy where culture, community, and commerce meet. Main Street Saskatchewan is a great example of how we are implementing the cultural policy, Mr. Speaker, as it combines all three of those elements.

As a part of the 2011 Saskatchewan advantage budget, the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport will invest \$1.65 million over three years in a redevelopment program for communities of all sizes. Main Street is a community-driven program that works to revitalize historic downtown commercial districts. The program is built on four solid principles which ensure its success.

The first principle is community organization. The program emphasizes community involvement by establishing community advisory boards which participate in producing a work plan that is unique and responsive to each community's character and needs.

The second principle is economic restructuring. Main Street will work with other economic development agencies to develop financial incentives, find new uses for historic buildings, strengthen existing businesses and attract new ones, and create neighbourhoods where arts and culture can thrive.

The third element of the program concerns design and heritage

conservation, Mr. Speaker. Main Street will assist communities in identifying their heritage and cultural assets and in creating a revitalization plan that includes the rehabilitation of existing heritage buildings. The program will encourage the conservation and reuse of distinctive historical structures, giving them new life and returning attractiveness of local character to the streetscape of these towns.

Now the fourth element of the program is promotion. Main Street will help communities to develop a marketing strategy that presents a positive image of towns and increases their tourism potential.

Mr. Speaker, this summer four communities will be selected for demonstration programs. Two will be smaller communities with populations under 2,000 people, and two will be larger. All Saskatchewan communities will be eligible to apply through a request for proposal process. The program will match funds raised by a community, and the funding will run for three years.

Main Street programs are time-tested initiatives that have successfully encouraged economic and social development in communities all across North America through heritage conservation. Past examples of successful Main Street revitalizations right here in Saskatchewan include Moose Jaw, Gravelbourg, and Saskatoon's Broadway Avenue. All three achieved significant economic development and heritage conservation results.

Mr. Speaker, we're very proud to introduce this new program. I encourage all interested communities to apply to this excellent program which they can find on our ministry's website. Main Street is an excellent example of how this government is implementing our cultural policy, the Pride of Saskatchewan, by working to support heritage stewardship and strengthening our arts, culture, and heritage sector.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

[14:30]

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know this government is very . . . has said many, many times it's very pleased or proud of its Building Pride, a policy that it announced last year. I just want to note, this is the government that three weeks before it announced its policy, Where Culture, Commerce and Community Meet, they had cut the funding to SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network]. They decided to fade SCN to black, a key pillar in the film and television industry, and then they realized they couldn't do that and decided to privatize it.

So this is a government that talks about policy. There's no doubt that Main Street is a very good program, but implementing a policy isn't about one-offs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Implementing a policy is about supporting the organizations that do the work in the arts and culture sectors.

This is a government that talks about heritage. And in the 100th anniversary of St. Peter's College, this is a government that

de-designated St. Peter's College without community consultation. The historic wood windows are gone. There's been an elevator added to the front of that building that has impacted . . . Well there's some question about where those windows are. There's some concern that those wood windows are now in the dump. The elevator that's been added to the front of the building has had a huge impact on the facade of the building.

So it's interesting to me that this is a government that talks about heritage support. It did give a modest increase to the Heritage Foundation, a modest increase, not nearly what they had been asking for, Mr. Speaker. Not nearly what they had been asking for. This is a government that's given a 1.5 per cent increase to the arts and culture sector. A 1.5 increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a status quo increase.

These arts organizations, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, are being starved. These are the organizations that have the capacity and the skills to in fact implement this policy. And this government is choosing to do one-offs to . . . How do you implement a policy with one-offs, Mr. Deputy Speaker? There's no doubt that Main Street has proven to be successful, but it'll impact four communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is about a whole entire arts and culture sector. And I think this government has no standing in this regard. This government has had a habit of directing their funding to special initiatives that would be much better directed to organizations whose core operations are under stress.

So although I commend the government for implementing the Main Street program, I would say that they need in fact to put the money into the arts and culture sector so this sector can do the work it needs to do in terms of implementing this policy. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to introduce guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the minister.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And thank you to the members of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. To you and through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your gallery are two individuals from Prince Albert who I want to take a moment to recognize.

But the most important one is the young gentleman by the name of Brenner Holash, who is in Regina today interviewing for the Page program in the House of Commons. I believe he's going to be following his brother's footsteps who was there a couple of years ago doing the job. And we all want to wish him the

best and the best of luck for that job. But on that note as well, Mr. Brenner Holash is the co-president of St. Mary's High School. And this weekend, he was selected by the presiding Queen's Bench and Provincial Court judges as the best overall lawyer at the CBA [Canadian Bar Association] provincial mock trial competition.

So he's done pretty well for not even attending law school yet, unlike his great father next to him, Mr. Mitch Holash, who's in your gallery, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who is one of our best lawyers in the province. And I'm sure that Brenner will follow his father's footsteps possibly and take over the law firm and serve the Saskatchewan people well. And we want to wish you the very best, Brenner. And to Mitch, welcome to your Legislative Assembly this afternoon. Gentlemen.

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce guests as well.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Furber: — Well I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to get up and join with the member from Prince Albert Carlton in introducing guests to the legislature from Prince Albert. It's a rare occasion when we get folks down here from Prince Albert.

And I want to, if I could, say a few things about the gentlemen in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker. Mitchell Holash is a friend of the family. I'm glad to say the member opposite recognized his skill as a lawyer. He has represented me on occasion, and I can attest to that skill first-hand, Mr. Speaker.

Additionally, Brenner Holash, not only is he a champion at mock trials and co-president of the high school, he's also an incredible athlete and a great soccer player. And I have the great displeasure of defending him in our senior soccer league in Prince Albert, and he's . . . [inaudible] . . . me on a number of occasions and scored a few goals at my expense. I hope that he does as well in his interview with the Page program as he does on a pitch in Prince Albert, and with all of the other things, wish him nothing but the best of success and the best of luck moving forward. Thanks so much, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 624 — *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act*

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move Bill No. 624, *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and*

Transparency Act be now introduced and read the first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved first reading of Bill No. 624, *The Contracts, Lease Agreements and Tenders Accountability and Transparency Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Deputy Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read?

Ms. Higgins: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 1,030 and 1,031.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled questions 1,030 and 1,031.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 169

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 169 — *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter the debate on *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act*, Bill No. 169. And Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Bill, it is clear what we are doing is taking a stand-alone division out, which used to be a department really, the Department of Consumer Affairs, and rolling it into the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission.

At present, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission does the following: it administers the following pieces of legislation which I think the public might be interested in. Basically the Financial Services Commission up until now has dealt with *The Credit Union Act*, *The Mortgage Brokerages and Mortgage Administrators Act*, *The New Generation Co-operatives Act*, *The Pension Benefits Act*, *The Saskatchewan*

Insurance Act, The Securities Act, The Trust and Loan Corporations Act, and The Co-operatives Act.

So the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission has essentially been looking after some fairly substantive Bills that deal with some fairly substantive operations in the province of Saskatchewan. What the government is proposing to do is to roll in what in essence is consumer protection into this commission.

And let's look at the consumer protection legislation that they want to roll into the Financial Services Commission: *The Auctioneers Act, The Cemeteries Act, The Charitable Fund-raising Businesses Act, The Collection Agents Act, The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act, The Credit Reporting Act, The Direct Sellers Act*, get this, *The Film and Video Classification Act, The Funeral and Cremation Services Act, The Motor Dealers Act, The Sale of Goods Act and The Ticket Sales Act.*

Now these Acts are where we, as individual consumers, can go to get some of our significant issues dealt with. And I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, that basically suppressing or eliminating the profile of consumer protection for individuals across the province is going to enhance consumer protection in the province of Saskatchewan.

So we in essence have some concerns about this Bill because all of us working in our constituencies know people that come to our offices that may have difficulties with an appliance that they may have purchased. They may have difficulty with some commission that they may have paid. They may have difficulty dealing with sales people in various institutions or situations. And so I think we need to be awfully careful when examining this particular piece of legislation.

When I look at *The Auctioneers Act* for instance, I mean *The Auctioneers Act* is basically a Bill or a piece of legislation that lays out some rules around those of us who may attend an auction, purchase something at an auction, and to make sure that bids are properly considered, and so on and so forth. And it also is there to protect the person that is the auctioneer. Now I'm not sure what's going to happen now that this particular piece of legislation is being moved over to the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission, which deals with pensions and the co-ops and the credit unions and so on and so forth. I mean are these pieces of legislation going to be suppressed, Mr. Speaker?

When I look at the Financial Services Commission at present, it administers a lot things. It administers credit union legislation. It administers legislation around mortgage brokers, and some of us have seen what's happened to individuals who may have difficulty with mortgage brokers in the province of Saskatchewan. It's involved in pension plan administration, in dealing with pension funds, dealing with selling and providing of insurance in the province, lending money, purchasing mortgages on property and land, personal property. These are all of the areas that the Financial Services Commission deals with now. And what I'm not sure about is whether or not they're going to suppress what is being proposed, and that is consumer protection, when they are dealing with some fairly substantive issues in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we will need to hear from the government. And we certainly didn't hear from the government when the Minister of Justice spoke about that because his speech didn't even fill a page of *Hansard*. He says, he tells us that consumer and consumer protection functions are constantly evolving. Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the evolution that we're witnessing here in the House with this particular piece of legislation is about suppressing consumer protection.

He says that the functions can be assigned to the commission by regulation. Well right now we know that there are people in the province of Saskatchewan, I believe in the Ministry of Justice, that deal with consumer protection issues day in and day out.

And consumer protection is important. The minister tells us consumer protection is important in our society. But I don't see, as the minister has told us, how this particular piece of legislation is going to emphasize, to quote the minister, "the government's focus on and involvement with consumer protection initiatives of all kinds."

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister was not at all substantive when he introduced this piece of legislation. He has not told us in a substantive way why he wants to roll *The Auctioneers Act*, for instance, over to the Financial Services Commission. He hasn't told us why he wants to roll *The Cemeteries Act* over to the Financial Services Commission. He hasn't told us why he wants to roll *The Consumer Protection Act, The Direct Sellers Act, The Credit Reporting Act* and — get this — *The Film and Video Classification Act, The Funeral and Cremation Services Act, The Motor Dealers Act, The Sale of Goods Act, The Ticket Sales Act, and The Consumer and Commercial Affairs Act* all over to the Financial Services Commission.

[14:45]

If you look at his legislation, he says that the consumer protection branch and the Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission share many of the same objectives. Well they share many of the same objectives, but what he hasn't told us is why we need to see this particular rolling in of consumer protection into the Financial Services Commission where they administer some very, very substantive pieces of legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that there are those of us on the opposition benches that are not exactly clear why the government has introduced this particular piece of legislation. The minister didn't outline in a clear and concise way why the decision to roll consumer protection functions that are now in the Department of Justice over to the Financial Services Commission, other than that they share some of the very same objectives.

We want to ensure that consumer protection is paramount. We want to ensure that there is a focus, a continued focus on consumer protection in the province of Saskatchewan. And we're not convinced at the moment that this gets us to where we want to go. And in fact, we think that this could very well suppress consumer protection in the province of Saskatchewan. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana

has adjourned debate on Bill 169, *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to make some comments about Bill No. 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*. Mr. Speaker, this is a relatively short piece of legislation in that all it does is take section 12 of the existing legislation and repeal it and replace it with a new section 12. And so the question then becomes, what is the purpose of this particular legislation?

What we know, Mr. Speaker, is that around 1980 the province of Saskatchewan participated with other Prairie provinces and the federal government in purchasing grain cars to make sure that the wheat and other grains grown by Canadian farmers could make it to the export points, both east and west and north. We include Hudson Bay.

And what was happening at that time, Mr. Speaker, is that the railway companies did not have sufficient funds in the revenues that they received to continue and maintain or purchase new hopper cars. So as many of us who remember those days will recall, most of the grain was hauled in boxcars, and it was picked up at elevators all across the province, and it was a system that had been in place for many, many years. And those of us who live in Regina know that Regina was often the graveyard for railway cars from every part of North America, and we saw a lot of these cars later going to the cutting yards up by IPSCO and then eventually being melted and being made by IPSCO, or now Evraz, into the steel pipe that has been used in the oil and gas industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what was happening at that time was that there was a recognition that some of these new hopper cars were needed in the railway system to make sure that the grain would make it to the export markets. So the province of Saskatchewan purchased 1,000 new cars and had them added to the railway fleet. And we know that they were used for the specific purpose of hauling grain to the various export points. But we also know that they were included into the whole North American fleet of grain transport cars, and they were well used all over North America.

I know that many times you would see a Saskatchewan grain car if you were in Arizona or California or sometimes even on the East Coast, in the same way that we sometimes see transport train cars from other railways across North America.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have grain cars that were purchased in 1980. It's now 31 years later. These grain cars are still owned by the province of Saskatchewan through the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, pursuant to the legislation which is being amended. What we also know is that over the last decade or more there have been continual safety reviews of the present fleet of cars, and so they have been, some of them repaired, some of them refurbished, a number of them repainted, but there are quite a number that still require a substantial amount of work.

So getting to this particular Bill, what is happening here? Now when the minister provided his remarks about the purpose of this Bill, he set out the fact that the plan is to have the Grain Car Corporation take on some added responsibilities around administering the shortline railway sustainability grant program.

Now my understanding is that this grant program has presently been operated out of the ministry, and so it once again raises the question that we see in many of these budget Bills, whether it was the Bill that my colleague just spoke about, related to the Financial Services Commission taking over consumer protection legislation, or some of the changes that are being proposed for *The Natural Resources Act*. Or you can go down a whole number of these Bills where it looks as if costs that have traditionally been in departments, which includes also the employees to manage these things, are being moved out of the line departments or ministries into corporations or other entities that are created. So what we seem to have here is the ability, yes, to administer this program for shortline railways but also the ability to help the minister attain his goal from the Minister of Finance, which is to reduce the number of civil servants in the department by 15 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it also raises questions about how the money is going to be obtained by this new corporation so that they can give out the grants that they're talking about. In the budget this year, the minister says that the amount of money for this shortline railway sustainability program will be \$700,000 for the year 2011-12, which is an increase of 200,000. And, Mr. Speaker, it appears that that money at this point is being obtained through the regular budgeting process.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also know that when one looks at the financial management review committee and their progress reports of what they had to do in 1992 to get the finances of the province back in order, one of the problems that was dealt with — on March 31st, 1992 — was that, pursuant to the recommendation of the commission, they recommended that transactions involving loans which can only be repaid through future budgetary appropriations by the government should be treated as expenditures rather than assets, for example, loans receivable in the government's financial statements.

So this change was made to the accounting practices to make sure that the finances of the government were more transparent. And so this change was made in the year '92-93 as the books of the province were being cleaned up after much of the difficulties of the Devine Conservative government during the '90s. As we all remember, the government changed in late 1991.

And so when they talk about which loans fell in this category,

that they should be treated as expenditures rather than assets, there were three of them. The first one was the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and had a debt of \$713 million, so that was written off against accumulated deficit. The second was the Saskatchewan Water Corporation who had a debt of \$182 million, and that was written off against the accumulated deficit on March 31st, 1992. And the third one was the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, and that had a debt of \$36 million that was written off against the accumulated deficit. And so what we had, Mr. Speaker, is debt accumulating in the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the changes that are being proposed in this legislation seem to make it even easier for the government, which controls the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, to end up having money administered within the Grain Car Corporation. And it also makes it clear that more financial assistance to railways — it doesn't specify only shortline railways but all railways — can be included or can be done within this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned that there are attempts made here to make it easier for this past practice of accumulating debt outside of government in one of these corporations . . . will be facilitated by this particular piece of legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am a great supporter of shortline railways, and one of the things that we should remember about what the definitions of a shortline railway is . . . In Canada railways that cross provincial boundaries are normally regulated on a national basis, and all the rules around the track and the transport are under federal law. It's a constitutional provision.

I know that people sometimes rue the demise of the grain elevators in small towns in Saskatchewan. And one of the issues that arose when many of the grain elevators were being torn down and removed in small town Saskatchewan was how could the province of Saskatchewan, as government, try to protect some of these facilities, sometimes even just as heritage properties. Well the issue always became that virtually all of them were built on land that was connected to the national railways, and they were constitutionally under the responsibility of the federal government. And it was almost impossible for the province to make any kind of legislative protection for them.

And I know that one of the things about the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, as it relates to shortline railways, is that as long as these railways are within the boundaries of the province of Saskatchewan, they are administered under Saskatchewan railway rules. And that's, I think, in many ways a positive thing because we, in the province of Saskatchewan, have sufficient skills and knowledge to administer these rail lines. But it also means that they operate in a slightly different basis. The other difficulty is there has to be an ability to connect with all of the nationally regulated railways.

[15:00]

And so in this legislation, we have the ability for the government to start making grants through the corporation, so it changes fundamentally what the Grain Car Corporation is. And possibly it allows for the province to set up their own grain car corporation, I mean, in the sense of purchasing shortlines and

getting involved with running railways within the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not certain that that's the hidden agenda of this government, but maybe it is. Maybe what we're seeing here is an attempt by the provincial government to get into the railway business using borrowed money or money that they would be able to administer through this particular piece of legislation. But ultimately the question becomes though, will this be done in a transparent way? Will it be done in a way that we don't end up subsequently having to write off all of the debt that's accumulated within the particular corporation?

So what is it that the legislation does? Well the new section 12 has a section (a) which adds one word to that previous section, and the word is commodities. So what it does is say that these particular assets owned by the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation can be used to haul commodities other than grain. So I assume that includes possibly minerals, coal, lumber, other kinds of things, but practically it would have, for the existing cars that are owned by the corporation, it would have to be something that could go into a bulk transport car.

Another intention or another amendment to the legislation in 12(b) makes it clear that the consulting management and administrative services can be provided in the corporation. And so, Mr. Speaker, this is a place where employees can be moved to this corporation and their salaries and other costs paid out of the corporation. So that's the clause that allows for the minister to reduce by 15 per cent the people who are actually working in his ministry.

Section 12(c) hasn't been changed. Section 12(d) provides that the corporation can purchase assets for the benefit of the rail industry. It doesn't make any restriction on what those assets are. So this could be office buildings. It could be stations. It could be loading equipment. It could be a whole set of new types of railcars which might be used by shortline railways in Saskatchewan, or it could be used by some of the national-international rail lines if the corporation felt that was appropriate.

And the section 12(e) is changed. What it does is recognize that, with this change in 12(d) which allows for purchase of all kinds of assets, it had to make sure that it also could dispose of assets. So it's possible with this particular legislation to actually change the Grain Car Corporation from what's been effectively a holding company or ownership company of 1,000 grain cars into a company that owns a whole number of brand new railcars that are used in other industries in the province or maybe even a passenger service. That would be possible with this wording, and it would allow them to sell off all of the grain cars or dispose of them in whatever way the corporation would deem appropriate. So, Mr. Speaker, it's these clauses can change totally the nature of what the corporation is.

Now another change in section 12(f) says, it says that other goods can be hauled and it'll provide . . . The corporation can define by what means grain, commodities, or other products produced in Saskatchewan or elsewhere — so in other words, things produced anywhere — may be transported. So it could be that it's not prudent to use grain cars or railcars or anything to do with rails to transport. This clause looks like it would allow

for the corporation to be transformed into a trucking company or some other transportation company to move grain commodities or other products.

And so what's happening here is that the wording that's been asked for by the minister and the staff has been wording that will allow for some changes in what they do. And what they have in this particular legislation is wording that allows for total change of the purpose of the Grain Car Corporation. So if that's the intention of the minister and the government, then probably they would want to set that out for us. It would've been possible to do some of the simple things that the minister's talked about without allowing for such broad changes to this particular legislation.

Now section 12(g) makes a change which allows for the government, obviously subject to Treasury Board, to provide financial assistance by way of grant, that's the money that the minister had in his speech; loan, we didn't hear anything about any loans in the minister's speech; guarantee, we didn't hear anything about guarantees; or similar means to persons, and persons includes both people like us but also corporations; for purposes of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment, or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

So under this clause, it would be possible for the government to pay a rail company, like one of the big international rail companies, to buy and take the railcars from the responsibility of the province of Saskatchewan. I didn't hear anything about that in the minister's speech when he was presenting this legislation. But the way this particular Bill is worded, it gives a much broader ability to do almost anything with the railcars but also with the corporation itself. And if there's any concerns about that, then you go to section 12(h) which allows for the corporation to do anything necessary to meet the objects and purposes of the government.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a short Bill, but it has all kinds of interesting times to . . . It gives all kinds of opportunities for the government to make some fairly dramatic changes, and it gives the opportunity for the government to give grants, loans, make guarantees, and it's a whole number of things that we've seen before with this corporation where ultimately the province was on the hook for quite a bit of money which had to be brought back into the clear responsibility of the ministry.

And so therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think that we should be careful to ask many questions about this Bill because it appears to have been worded in a much broader fashion than was necessary to accomplish the purposes of what the minister has set out in his speech. So it may be that he'll be able to clarify this, but I think that we should be especially careful. I know other of my colleagues will want to make comments about this particular Bill because once again it goes to the heart of the support of shortline railways and the ability to transport grain within our province. We think that's a positive thing to do, but we need to do it in a way that doesn't lose that asset for the producers of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I will move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Lakeview has

moved to adjourn debate on Bill 167, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter in the debate on Bill No. 168. And of course the Bill's *An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*. Now, Mr. Speaker, looking at the Bill itself you can see that the nature of the Bill is primarily more of . . . and I hate to use the phrase, housekeeping purposes, but that's basically what the Bill is all about in terms of what needs to be corrected in some of the language in some of the previous Bills.

And, Mr. Speaker, for a summary, people ought to know that this Bill was a direct result of some of the discussions and the negotiations, as I understand it, that happened in the fall of 2007 in relation to the last teachers discussion they had with this current government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was three and a half years ago. And there was a minor amendment necessary under this Bill to accommodate some of the changes in some of the agreements that were arrived at, at that time. And obviously the government in their haste to try and make sure they were able to get through this Bill, through this process, they had a few errors that were on the Bill, and this is what we're talking about today.

So those teachers and those students that may be watching the proceedings, the Bill, while minor in nature, certainly I think what I want to touch on, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that they have not responded to this minor housekeeping amendments, these few minor amendments in this Bill to address the discussions they had in 2007. How is it now in 2011 we're finally getting through with the minor amendments that were promised by those guys three and a half years ago, Mr. Speaker?

So what I'm going to point out is that a lot of the people out in northern Saskatchewan, they value our teaching profession a great deal as they do all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. About the only people that don't appreciate the teachers in general, I would certainly want to point out, would be the Saskatchewan Party government. Because again, going back to this minor issue in Bill 168, which is just an amendment, it took them three and a half long years to bring this forward to correct some of those errors and some of the mistakes that were made. Why couldn't they do this very quickly, Mr. Speaker? I don't know. I can't answer for them. But I can certainly, I am going to guess as to why it took them three and a half years to put

forward this minor amendment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many communities in northern Saskatchewan . . . And I'm making the reference to northern Saskatchewan. People ought to know that, you know, it's not a disregard nor is it disrespect for some of the other teachers throughout the province. And the reason why I'm specifically focusing on northern Saskatchewan is primarily because we in northern Saskatchewan see every day the positive effect and positive impact that our teaching industry offers the North.

[15:15]

In many northern communities, in many northern communities the school is the saving grace in many of the young people's lives. Mr. Speaker, I look at some of the communities in general — La Loche, Beauval, La Ronge, Sandy Bay — there are many gifted and intelligent and very committed teachers, Mr. Speaker, that do an incredible amount of work. And obviously they have to get up early and they have to prepare their lesson plans for the day. They have to go through the students to the parents. They've got to volunteer after that for some of the school activities on their own, and they also participate in many of the community functions and activities, Mr. Speaker.

So I think if you look at the contribution of the teachers in northern Saskatchewan, it is phenomenally more important, Mr. Speaker, it is phenomenally more integral and it is phenomenally more, in terms of time, more of a commitment in northern Saskatchewan to be a teacher. And as I mentioned at my earlier comments, if it takes three and a half years to do a minor amendment to an Act and to a Bill, it really shows how much priority that the teaching profession has from the Saskatchewan Party government. It is embarrassing; it is shameful, Mr. Speaker. And they ought to treat our teachers with a bit more respect than what they have shown certainly over the past couple of years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I watch with interest as to what they're doing on not just this particular Bill 168 but some of the other Bills that they've brought forward, Mr. Speaker, and some of the other ideas that they're playing with. And one of them of course is the school funding model. Well guess what, Mr. Speaker? They're looking at the education agreement. They're looking at how they're going to fund education in the future.

But the only problem is they're bringing it forward a year from now, 2011, a year after the election, they're bringing forward this agreement. And right across the board, the Teachers' Federation of course, the School Boards Association, parents, the taxpayers, people really want to know what's going on with that funding agreement. And yet this party and this government are saying, well we're going to wait until after 2012 before we unveil our plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people are saying, well that doesn't make any sense because obviously the election's happening in 2011. We need to see what they have planned for education in terms of the funding model prior to the next election, Mr. Speaker, not after this fall's election. And again they have not been forthright and forthcoming in terms of some of that information.

Now Bill 168 is much similar in terms of their respect for the teaching profession, Mr. Speaker. And the reason why I say that is in Bill 168 the changes are minor. They're not earth-shattering in a sense of making some of the amendments. And why did it take them three and a half years to bring this forward to correct these small housekeeping issues, Mr. Speaker? Because they're not committed to dealing with the teachers. That's the simple and plain truth, Mr. Speaker.

They don't care what they do in terms of the manner in which they treat them. They don't deal with their issues in a timely fashion. And they have politicized the process to a point where people don't know what's going on. They first removed the opportunity for the local school boards to do any taxing through the property tax avenue. And then they also sit down and they make sure that they get rid of some of the teachers' assistants that they've been so eloquently and so constantly trying to get rid of some of the teachers' assistants. And now some of these small amendments have taken three and a half years, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess the point is, on some of these smaller points that we've been dealing with this particular government on, they have been dragging their feet. They have been disrespectful to the process. And they have tied the hands of a lot of groups — not just the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], the School Boards Association, not just the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], but parents and people that are involved with education such as the teachers' assistants and many of the support staff that they have.

Now as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk a bit about the respectful relationship that the teachers have in northern Saskatchewan. And I often travel to some of these communities and I see the direct impact. If you look at a couple of good examples and the manner in which . . . Turnor Lake is an example, the Birch Narrows First Nations where the chief there has built a beautiful facility, and he should be recognized for doing all that work. And thank goodness for the stimulus money because that's exactly what happens when you have the stimulus spending that was required by the federal government.

The Birch Narrows First Nation got their school built and, Mr. Speaker, this school was built because the chief and the council fought for many, many years. They worked very hard. So I want to commend and thank Chief Robert Sylvester on some of the work that he's done. And people ought to know in Turnor Lake, whether it's the Métis community or whether it's the First Nations of Birch Narrows, that it was the chief and council, as well as the mayor of the neighbouring Métis community, that fought for that school. They fought and they never gave up, Mr. Speaker.

I can remember when we had meetings in Birch Narrows seven or eight years ago, when under the former NDP administration, there was a plan to actually build that school, Mr. Speaker. It was going to be a joint school between the province and the federal government, but what happened at the time was INAC [Indian and Northern Affairs Canada] wouldn't go beyond the prescribed amount that we needed from the federal government to have this building, or have this school built. So the province was ready to move. And what happened, Mr. Speaker, is INAC saying, well we need a bit more money than what you guys,

what we thought we needed, so we have to go back to the federal Treasury Board and ask for more money, and this is beyond the spending limit that we have right now on this project.

So you fast forward seven or eight years and finally, because of the stimulus funding and the stimulus planning that was necessary to spend this money, all of a sudden INAC found the money. And of course the chief and some of the other leaders, the local council and the mayor and a number of other leaders in the education field certainly never gave up. They continued fighting for it, and they all of a sudden see this new school being built.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this school is on the reserve side. It's a beautiful school. I had the opportunity to go visit the school and surprising, some of the facilities . . . that the rooms within the facility were named after people that helped them out. And obviously, Mr. Speaker, some of the people within the Turnor Lake community, both the Métis community of Turnor Lake and the Birch Narrows First Nations, they're a very generous lot. They're very good people. And, Mr. Speaker, when they built this school at the request and certainly at the hard work of the chief and also with the support of some of the educational leaders and the staff and some of the Métis leaders in the community, they did not do anything else except name a couple of the rooms within the facility after people that came to help them.

People like Dave Adams, where they actually named, I believe it was the gym part they named after Dave Adams. And many people know Dave Adams was an educator in northern Saskatchewan for many, many years. They named the library. I believe they named it after Ernie Lawton, another person that worked very hard with the community over the years. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the nature, when I speak of northern education, that is the nature in which northern people value educators, value builders. They value some of the leadership that has been shown over the years.

And when you have a community like Birch Narrows that really, really supports their children by giving them a good, beautiful school and having them work very hard over the years for their children, they not only were able to do that but they also wanted to recognize some of the outside people that helped them achieve some of their educational goals. And certainly Dave Adams and, as I mentioned, Ernie Lawton were some of the people that obviously were very instrumental in helping them achieve a number of educational objectives. And, Mr. Speaker, that's something that they're quite prepared to share in recognizing some of these professional people. And that shows the generosity and it certainly shows the integrity and it shows the leadership of not just the Métis community at Turnor Lake, but the Birch Narrows First Nations that share the same people, the same children.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the education system in northern Saskatchewan, Birch Narrows, Turnor Lake is one good example of how a Métis community and a strong First Nations leader got together and they worked out their differences and they got a new school built.

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and giving full marks and full recognition to Chief Robert Sylvester and his council as well as the mayor and council of Turnor Lake, and them and only them working hard and never forgetting for one instant that they are the ones that built that school, and all of us as legislators in this Assembly ought to take our hat off to them and say, thank you very much, Chief Sylvester. Thanks to all the mayors in the past and the councils of the village of Turnor Lake and of course the educational leaders and the council of Birch Narrows for never giving up on their dream, for constantly fighting for that facility.

And today, Mr. Speaker, you're seeing that education in Turnor Lake is moving leaps and bounds forward primarily because of local leadership. And that local leadership was more than prepared to recognize other people from outside the communities that helped them along. And, Mr. Speaker, that's dedication and that's leadership.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we go on to Buffalo Narrows and we see some of the values and some of the educators there . . . And again I go back to this Bill 168, a small amendment. Why did it take them three and a half years to proceed with this amendment? It's because they don't value educators, Mr. Speaker. They do not value the education system in northern Saskatchewan as they don't in southern Saskatchewan. And they'll pay a price for that, Mr. Speaker. They will pay a price for that.

And you look at Bill 168. As I mentioned at the outset, it talks about teachers' pensions, it talks about teachers' disabilities, and it took them three and a half years to make one small amendment. Like my goodness, they have to get with the program, Mr. Speaker. They have to get with the program because they're so far behind in showing their commitment to the educators of our great province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I look at Buffalo Narrows, as I mentioned in my earlier comments, and under the leadership of their principal, Jackie Durocher . . . [inaudible] . . . She has worked very hard, Mr. Speaker, along with all of the other staff within Twin Lakes School, to really bring forward a model in which you walk through the school, you see a lot of well-behaved kids. It's very quiet. They're starting to learn a lot about some of the other challenges that they have in the community, whether it's things to do with sport. You see a great hockey team from Buffalo Narrows. You see a lot of kids being involved in the community. You see them playing basketball, basketball outside in the community play area. So these are some of the things, Mr. Speaker, that I see as I travel through Buffalo Narrows.

But I know the school has had tremendous progress in working with the students. And as you go through the school, Mr. Speaker, as I have on numerous occasions, as you go through the school you'll notice the school is well-kept. It's very clean, and they maintain their school as best they can. The staff are very dedicated there. And I think Mr. Thompson is one of . . . the person that looks after the school.

And I think one of the things that people ought to know is that, as you look at the activity within the school, you can certainly see that there's a lot of activity after school. And you look at the quietness of the school. You can tell the students are behaved

and learning.

Mr. Speaker, look at the maintenance of the school. You see how fantastic the school looks. And they're doing wonderful things, marvellous things for the kids of Buffalo Narrows. And, Mr. Speaker, we ought to have a lot more respect for them in recognizing that work that they have done as opposed to delaying small, little housekeeping items in their pension plan and their disability plan for three and a half years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in Beauval, in Green Lake, in Pinehouse, there's just a tremendous amount of valuable teachers throughout these communities, and they do a lot for their communities. I've used Turnor Lake as an example. I've used Buffalo Narrows as an example.

I've always spoke highly of La Loche in a sense that La Loche is one of the communities where the school is the beacon of hope for many of the local people and for many of the kids. That's where a lot of the kids go to look at opportunities to further their education, to really make that particular community school a true community school because the entire community goes there. And they utilize that school as much as they can.

And you, over the time, over the years, Mr. Speaker, you'll hear of the names of some of the staff members like Greg Hatch, like Stephen King. These are some of the people that have worked over the years in the leadership of the principal role. And they continue doing that, Mr. Speaker, and they hire staff. And they have very high standards for their staff. They expect a lot of their staff.

And many of these staff members, they go on and on and on in terms of the commitment that is required of them. And, Mr. Speaker, they need, they need to be recognized for that. Now the local school council and certainly the Northern Lights representative, Mr. St. Pierre, Robert St. Pierre, he often talks about how much the dedication, the dedicated staff have to show in order to stay there. And it takes a lot of extra effort, not only to recruit, but to retain some of the teachers in these northern communities.

When I travel to La Loche, again I see that beautiful school. I see a beautiful people. I see a beautiful education system, and I see well-disciplined children. And I also see, I also see, Mr. Speaker, I see dedicated educators. And I say to myself, thank goodness we have that system right now in this community and many other communities. Because at the very least we have some hope for our young people that they look at that school, look at that board, look at that staff and they say, these are the people that are front line fighters to develop a better community, Mr. Speaker.

And the amount of treatment and the disrespect they get from this Sask Party government needs to stop. They've got to recognize that in many of these northern communities, a lot of times the beacon of hope in our communities is the school. It is the school. And these schools are going to stop a lot of problems for our community. They're going to create a lot of opportunities for our young kids. And, Mr. Speaker, we've got to do a heck of a lot more than what is currently being done by that government to make sure we keep a system like that in

place.

[15:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to suggest that everything is rosy. We know that there are challenges. To recruit and to retain educators in northern Saskatchewan is always difficult. Mr. St. Pierre has told me on numerous occasion that it's hard getting teachers to northern Saskatchewan, and you want to keep the good ones. It's always a balancing act between not only having programs, but having the right complement of teachers, having construction projects in place, the resources that are necessary for additional activities. These are some of the things that some of the local boards and the Northern Lights School Division often struggle with. They struggle with this every single day.

And, Mr. Speaker, people ought to recognize them and respect them for that role. Because at the end of the day, what have these communities got? All they have, as I mentioned earlier, is they have their school. And that school is supposed to represent a place of learning, a place of hope for our young people. And we've got to make sure we do all we can to support the teaching industry and to make sure that Bills like this Bill 168 isn't held up for three and a half years for a minor amendment dealing with pensions and disabilities, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the points that I want to raise today in relation to this Bill.

And people out there in Saskatchewan land, all throughout the province, they know what's going on. The teachers know what's happening. STF is in tune with what's going on with this particular government. They've had record revenues, record revenues, Mr. Speaker, that they inherited and yet they're not dealing with the basic fundamental issue of making sure we have a good system, an education system that our children can certainly rely on, that our children can benefit from.

Now again Mr. Speaker, going back to northern Saskatchewan, I look at some of the issues that many of the teachers have raised to me. Some of them have written letters to me, and they are quite concerned as to what some of the challenges are in some of these northern communities. And I don't want to bring out their names, Mr. Speaker, because primarily because it is something that they've written to me privately. But they talk about the challenges of travelling to northern Saskatchewan on roads that are in very poor shape, Mr. Speaker. They talk about the costs of going out for dental benefits. They talk about the costs of going out for medical attention. They talk about the need for them to have a relaxing recreational time in the community besides teaching and teaching and working, Mr. Speaker.

And they talk about some of the challenges that other jurisdictions don't provide to northern Saskatchewan or to the province in general. And they say, well why can't we do that here? And the reason why we can't do any of those things here, Mr. Speaker, is that the Sask Party government is not serious about supporting our educators.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I alluded a bit to the challenges of the teaching profession in northern Saskatchewan. We know that there are teachers out there that have incredible degrees in terms of their experience and their own education where they spend years and years and years developing their resumé. And

certainly they've committed to their profession and it's surprising that in some jurisdictions as Alberta, sometimes they get paid 15, \$20,000 more than what their counterpart in Saskatchewan would get paid, Mr. Speaker. And why is that? Why is that, despite us having record revenues in Saskatchewan today? Why is that, Mr. Speaker?

And I'll tell you why it is — because you have an insensitive Sask Party government that doesn't care about education, that doesn't care about the teachers and never will. And, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned at the outset, the teachers will not forget this, Mr. Speaker. They will not forget this. And if you think they're angry now, you wait. They'll be much angrier as time goes on because they'll see that government having all kinds of money and building and committing to 20-year leases for buildings that they don't need. And that comes at a cost, Mr. Speaker, to the taxpayers. And they'd rather sink money into buildings that aren't needed than put money into teachers that could really build the future of our kids and build the future of this province. And that is what's fundamentally wrong with the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. Their priorities are skewed and, Mr. Speaker, their priorities are way off base.

And I can't figure out, Mr. Speaker. I was sitting here trying to figure these guys out because on one hand they have emblazoned in their budget document the Premier saying, I want to get rid of 15 per cent of the civil servants in Saskatchewan. That's his target, 15 per cent. So if you want to get rid of 15 per cent of your civil servants, why is it you're building buildings that are going to continue to have more and more cost to the people?

Now, Mr. Speaker, how does that connect to Bill 168? It's because they've ignored issues around education too long, Mr. Speaker. And they're busy making sweetheart deals with their buddies, and that comes at a cost and expense to the people of Saskatchewan for the next 20 years. Why can't they make the same commitment to our teaching profession, Mr. Speaker? Because they don't care.

And a lot of teachers come up to me and they tell me, Mr. Speaker, they say, you know the bad thing about it is that we know our kids are having trouble with, whether it's the legal system — some of the problems we have in these communities — or whether it's family problems or whether it's housing problems, they come to our school, we try and work with them. We know that they're a great bunch of kids, and we do our best to build hope in them.

But, Mr. Speaker, they get tired. They get tired of all the extra work they do. They get tired of not being recognized for that extra work. They get tired of being taken for granted, Mr. Speaker. And they get tired of being abused. And at the end of the day, it's much easier to be a teacher in other jurisdictions. And they often ask themselves, what am I doing here? And, Mr. Speaker, that government is helping those teachers make up their minds in leaving our province and leaving our north to go somewhere else where they're much more valued and certainly much more appreciated. And I say shame on the Saskatchewan Party government. They should do more.

Bill 168 didn't need three and a half years to come through with a minor amendment on their contract — three and a half years,

Mr. Speaker. Now imagine . . . It's just a minor amendment dealing with their pension and their disability aspects. Imagine if they're going to start talking about salaries and further benefits. How many years will that take?

Well the Minister of Education was astute enough to say, well we're not going to deal with that until after the next election. Well people in the education profession and certainly the NDP opposition, we're simply going to say, well we see right through that ruse, Mr. Speaker. Their plan is to save all the bad news until after the next election. And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, people don't like to be used in that fashion, and there's a lot of people that will make up their own minds prior to the election. So no matter how much that government tries to hide their education agreement or funding arrangement, people are going to make their own, their own scenarios up in their own mind, Mr. Speaker. And we'll do our own hypothetical thinking on that one.

And what's going to happen at the end of the day is that people are going to come around and they're going to say, well we don't trust these guys. It took them three and a half years to deal with one small change on Bill 168. How many more years is it going to take them to figure out a funding arrangement, a sustainable funding arrangement to properly pay our teachers and to finally commit to the education system of not just northern Saskatchewan but to the entire province?

Now, Mr. Speaker, getting back to a number of other communities I want to touch base on, one of them of course is the community of Beauval. Beauval has a population base of over 1,000 people. It's an exciting community. They've got a great local board of education that does a lot of work. They have a great Northern Lights representative in Joe Daigneault. And Mr. Daigneault is a very well-educated man himself. And he works very closely with the community and certainly with the parents.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he knows, he knows, Mr. Daigneault knows exactly what is necessary to build a solid school system, an education system. Why does he know? Because he's also principal of Northlands College in Buffalo Narrows. And he sees how you need the proper math, the proper English, the proper sciences to become a student that can take further studies after grade 12 to become a journeyman electrician or become an engineer or a doctor or whatever choice that child chooses.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the community of Beauval, their hope is that Valley View School is able to function well and function efficiently and that the teachers there are committed like anywhere else. But they've got to be recognized, and they've got to be supported. In three and a half years, to make a minor amendment to their last contract, Mr. Speaker, does in no way, shape, or form show any commitment to our teaching profession.

Now getting back to Valley View School, there's a lot of kids that go to school there, and there's a lot of dedicated staff, as I mentioned. And as you look at the community itself and you look at their future, like I said, they've got over 1,000 people there, and they have dreams and aspirations. It's a fantastic community. They're very active in the community.

And I often make reference to Beauval being the music capital of the Northwest, Mr. Speaker. And the reason why I make reference to them being the music capital of the Northwest is because you go into Beauval and you have hundreds of gifted people who can play guitar or sing or do the violin and do a number of other musical instruments. Like this is one community that I believe, Mr. Speaker, had three or four teachers that took under their wing 30 or 40 young kids, and they taught them all the value of music. They taught them how to play guitar. Some of them learned from their parents, but a lot of the teachers that came to the community taught a lot of kids the different ways of playing different instruments. And today now you see Beauval, pound for pound, they put out the best musicians and most gifted musicians in the region, Mr. Speaker. And that is because some of the teachers and some of the parents took time to teach the young kids.

Now going back to my earlier comments about the community of Beauval, they know that those teachers that work in the school are dedicated teachers. They're dedicated staff members. And they say, what more can we do to build the system up because if we build the system up we're building our children's future, making it brighter, making it more sustainable, making it more hopeful to everybody.

And, Mr. Speaker, the best way to do that is treat them with dignity and treat them with respect. And that is to start teaching — to start teaching — the Sask Party politicians, what you got to do to build that system. And the first step is you respect the teacher. You respect the teacher, Mr. Speaker, and that is the one lesson I think the Sask Party government has yet to learn. But they will learn it pretty soon, Mr. Speaker, because the principal is coming soon to put them out in the hallway, put them out in the hallway for a couple of hours and stand out there and pay penance for their sins against education, Mr. Speaker.

And I say today that Bill 168, a small amendment under Bill 168, that took them three and a half years to do, that is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely ridiculous.

So when I mention names of some of the educators and some of the people involved with our kids, of some of the facilities and some of the leaders, as I mentioned Northern Lights representatives, I talk about some of the local leadership in some of these communities, some of the local teachers and the staff, Mr. Speaker, these are real stories. These are real people, these are real issues, and these are real success stories. And why is it, why is it, and I can't figure out for the life of me, that the Sask Party is not showing them enough respect. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? And I can't for the life of me figure out why they're not.

And one of the things I think that's really important is that at the end of the day, when all the dust is settled, that teachers will know a number of things. They will know who got rid of the teachers' assistants. They will know who done that. They will know who neutered the local school boards of education of being able to go after income from the education property tax. They will know who took three and a half years to go through minor amendments in Bill 168, the Bill of which I'm speaking today. They will know who toyed with the educational funding model and put it till after the election before they dealt with,

before they deal with it. They will know some of these issues, Mr. Speaker, very, very well and they'll know it.

They'll know it sooner than the November election, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the things that the Sask Party is hoping never happens. They hope the teachers never know what kind of game that they're playing, the Sask Party's political game. But, Mr. Speaker, rest assured STF and the teachers are fully aware of the games of the Minister of Education and the Sask Party government and their leader, Mr. Speaker.

So once again I think it's important that people out there in Saskatchewan know that from the NDP perspective, we support and we protect and we want to enhance our teachers' lives so they become freer to teach our kids more, free to do things that they want to do given the proper resources that they so richly deserve, to make sure they continue offering hope, and that you don't see teachers leaving this industry, going off to some other provinces or pray it never happens to the extent that it's happened in other areas where you see a lot of teachers leaving a lot of communities, especially in northern Saskatchewan because, Mr. Speaker, that would be certainly a crying shame for our north and certainly a crying shame for our province.

[15:45]

So, Mr. Speaker, it's time for these guys to own up, the Saskatchewan Party, to own up to our teachers. And if it takes you three and a half years to deal with Bill 168, well then shame on you. You should have done this a long time ago, not three and a half years for some minor amendments as attached to Bill 168. And shame on you for holding off the education funding till after the next election because we see right through it as an opposition, and every single teacher sees right through this ploy, this political game you're playing.

And, Mr. Speaker, they will come up with their own theories as to why they're doing that. And as I had mentioned in the earlier comment, that we certainly have our theories as to why they're doing that, Mr. Speaker . . . is there's going to be a lot of bad changes under that government, Mr. Speaker.

And given the fact that Saskatchewan has enjoyed a great amount of wealth, Mr. Speaker, they have enjoyed a great amount of wealth. They have seen the economy move forward, and things are really happening, Mr. Speaker. And the sad thing is, Mr. Speaker, is the Sask Party really had nothing to do with that. They inherited all that good news. They inherited all that money. They inherited all that economy. Everything was just moving in the right direction, and along came the Sask Party, and they've had just a grand old time spending their inheritance, Mr. Speaker. Every single person in Saskatchewan knows that.

And, Mr. Speaker, time will show. Time will show the weakness of this leader and of this party, because quite frankly at the end of the day, once the inheritance is gone and tough times start rolling around, that's when decisions in leadership will show.

Right now the money's there, and they're paying off their friends, and they're ignoring a lot of key groups, Mr. Speaker — whether it's the Aboriginal people, whether it's the chiropractors, or whether it's the teachers. You can't sustain

that kind of building up of enemies because they're going to get together, and they're going to throw you out of that office and say you're out of there because you didn't deal with the issues despite the fact that you had the money.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned at the outset, I watched today some of the news clippings around President Obama, and he has a tough task of rebuilding the economy and rebuilding the budget and the deficit they're facing within the States. That's a huge challenge. It's a tremendous challenge. And President Obama was there, taking the challenge head-on, and saying what fights he has, what issues he's got to show, and he's got to provide that leadership, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Party's never really had any problems since they got into office because they had all the money. They had the booming economy. And all they done was they helped their friends out, Mr. Speaker. That's all they done is they helped their friends out. They really had no challenges. It was a huge gift to them. So they get this money, and they get this booming economy. It's easy to be a government when you have all this money coming in. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? They forget once again the basic rule of making sure you stay in government, and that is to treat people well and treat them with respect.

And when it comes to the teaching profession, they done nothing of that, Mr. Speaker. They showed total disdain and disregard for the teaching profession. And the reason why, Mr. Speaker — it's proved right here under Bill 168 — is because it took them three and a half years to do a minor amendment to the last agreement. Imagine for a moment how many years it'll take them to come up with a long-term funding agreement and a salary agreement with STF following the next election.

I think what's going to happen is they're going to ignore the teaching profession, and they're going to see a lot of teachers leave this industry and, in my case, leave the North. And, Mr. Speaker, that's going to have a huge price for Saskatchewan for many, many years.

Our students, our northern communities, our northern people need our teachers. We need our schools and they need it to be . . . make sure that the education foundation is solid for northern Saskatchewan. And we see no evidence whatsoever, whatsoever from that party. And, Mr. Speaker, do they care? No. It's not fair and the Sask Party don't care.

And I'm telling teachers all throughout northern Saskatchewan, you start that phrase, start that chant: it is not fair; the Sask Party don't care. When it comes to teaching, to properly supporting our teachers, they're not doing. That's not fair; they don't care, Mr. Speaker. And I go on and on about the thousands of examples and the hundreds of teachers and the manner in which they're being treated and the disregard and the disdain and them not recognizing the local leadership in the building of schools, in the building of students, in the building of staff, that they're not doing nothing to reward these teachers with a decent sense of respect towards them, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why I go back to saying to a lot of teachers out there, if it took them three and a half years to deal with this small, little Bill which had a few amendments to it, three and a half

years to deal with one small Bill, imagine the time and imagine the hurt and imagine the pain to come yet when they start talking about a collective agreement, when they start talking about major investments into our schools, when they start talking about facilities, Mr. Speaker. Imagine how bad it'll become under a Sask Party government. Three and a half years for minor amendments to Bill 168 and, Mr. Speaker, the big issues are coming yet to this government, and they have not shown any respect for the teaching profession.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot more to say about this and a lot more to say about a lot of educational challenges in the North. And we'll continue standing up here and taking on that government to make sure they do it properly and to do it right. And therefore I'd like to adjourn debate on Bill 168 for now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — The member from Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill 168, the teachers superannuation and disability benefits Bill. Is the Assembly ready to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — Carried.

Bill No. 155

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm extremely pleased this afternoon to stand and enter into debate on a very important issue before this legislature and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province value their natural resources, and they take the issue of the protection of their natural resources very seriously. And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a history from this government since it came to power three years ago that undermines the importance of those natural resources, particularly, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the issue of protected lands. And over the last three years, we've seen a significant erosion of the protection of lands that people value very strongly, Mr. Speaker.

So whenever we have a piece of legislation coming forward that deals with the protection of our natural resources, Mr. Speaker, we're going to examine it very carefully and be somewhat skeptical about what the intent of this government is. Mr. Speaker, it would be, without doubt, a major concern to many in the province if we didn't evaluate natural resource legislation, Mr. Speaker, very thoroughly and analyze all the implications and potential pitfalls of legislation prior to passing it through to committee.

Mr. Speaker, just a year ago we had representatives from many, many organizations that were concerned about 3 million acres of prime protected land being taken out of protection, Mr.

Speaker, and being placed at the whim of the Ministry of the Environment, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that land previously was protected in legislation and needed a change in that legislation in debate in this Assembly prior to the sale or disposition of any of that land. And, Mr. Speaker, that was done for a reason. It was done so that we — those of us who are elected on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan — had to in each and every occasion debate, analyze, and look at the removal of any land from protection, Mr. Speaker. And that was there because the people of this province wanted it that way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with the change a little over a year ago and now 3 million acres aren't protected in the same way, the government ministry can sell off or de-designate that land without debate in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, without the people of Saskatchewan even knowing. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan wouldn't know about it until after they'd done it, Mr. Speaker, and when, Mr. Speaker, we would see an order in council posted that it had occurred and we'd find out only after it had occurred.

In the past, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had the ability to debate, challenge, re-evaluate each and every situation prior to it being removed from protection, Mr. Speaker, prior to it being sold off, Mr. Speaker, and today we don't have that protection. And, Mr. Speaker, that's part of this province's heritage, part of this province's environmental value, the fact that we had protected prime land, Mr. Speaker, that had special environmental value to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And now we don't have that level of protection because the existing government removed that protection and put it in the hands or the control of the cabinet, Mr. Speaker, of the ministry. And only after, only after the action is completed would the opposition find out or the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with legislation that deals with the protection of our natural resources, the people of this province want the opposition to be very diligent in their examination of the legislation, to look very carefully at the aspects of and implications of that legislation, Mr. Speaker, because we've already seen a very detrimental change made by this government, a very detrimental change that takes away the protection from very important habitat land in our province, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we're looking at this particular piece of legislation, on the surface, the Bill looks innocuous. It looks like there is very little to be concerned about. It looks like there's very little to be . . . that very few implications, Mr. Speaker. But as you see in every piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, the devil's in the detail. The devil is always in the detail, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, so what are the implications of the changes under this legislation? And that is what we're here to debate today and what we will need to debate over the next several weeks, Mr. Speaker, and in committee because the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know what the potential implications are. We need to expose what pitfalls there are in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and we need to examine whether this is the right course for the people of Saskatchewan and the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the history of the current government and their removal of land from protection under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker, we need to question whether or not these changes are in fact removing the role of protecting, Mr. Speaker, protecting our fisheries and protecting our hunting and the responsibility of government to an advisory, an advisory council, Mr. Speaker, appointed by the government.

But, Mr. Speaker, how do we know then what happens? Again because it's once removed again from government, the accountability, the transparency, the reporting, Mr. Speaker — those are things that are of absolute importance to the people of this province because it's our heritage. It's in fact the peoples' land. It's the peoples' resources. It belongs to future generations. It belongs to our children and our grandchildren, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't belong to those of us who just sit in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't belong to the members of the cabinet. It doesn't belong to the Premier. It belongs to every single person in this province, Mr. Speaker. And it's put aside and protected not just for this generation, Mr. Speaker, but for future generations — our children, our grandchildren, Mr. Speaker. And it is our responsibility to continue to protect, protect, Mr. Speaker, our land, our habitat, and our wildlife so that those children can enjoy the things that we can enjoy today, and that we don't have to worry about our children having pristine lakes, Mr. Speaker, wildlife areas in which to hunt, beautiful forests in which to visit and camp, Mr. Speaker. It's important that we today, in establishing our practices and our rules and principles on a move-forward basis are absolutely certain that we are protecting those things for our children and our grandchildren.

Because, Mr. Speaker, those of us who are elected have an opportunity to influence the outcomes of even something as important as the environment, Mr. Speaker. And we have to take that responsibility seriously because I want my grandson, and I would like your grandchildren, Mr. Speaker, and other grandchildren across this province to have the opportunities to have those pristine lakes to fish and to hunt, Mr. Speaker, to have forests to visit, to camp in, Mr. Speaker. The protection of our environment, the protection of our wildlife, and the protection of what is important to future generations rests with us. Ultimately we have the responsibility of making the rules.

[16:00]

And there's also the concern any time, Mr. Speaker, when we're pushing that responsibility off to a third party. Because as we push the responsibility of government further away from the control of government, Mr. Speaker, it becomes more difficult, more difficult and more timely to understand exactly what's going on. Now I'm not saying that other organizations and the council, Mr. Speaker, advisory council is necessarily bad. But again it doesn't flesh out exactly what decisions will be made by the environment . . . the advisory council, pardon me, Mr. Speaker. It says that any other responsibilities that are assigned by the minister.

Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for the protection of our wildlife, the protection of our environment, our habitat for future generations doesn't rest with an advisory board. It rests

with those of us who are elected by the people of Saskatchewan to represent them in this legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, any time that the responsibilities of government and the responsibilities of the legislature are being pushed to another party further out from the influence of government, further away from the ability of members of this Assembly to debate, to talk about, and to influence the outcomes, Mr. Speaker, I have concerns, as should all the people of Saskatchewan. Because, Mr. Speaker, an advisory council appointed by the minister doesn't have the same responsibilities. They're accountable to a minister or to a government, not accountable directly to the people of Saskatchewan in the same way the members of this Assembly are.

So, Mr. Speaker, I could be held to account for the positions I take in this legislature directly by the people of Saskatchewan. An advisory board appointed by the minister cannot. And, Mr. Speaker, that is an important differentiation. It's an important difference that really needs to be understood as we look at whether or not we should pass responsibility to third parties for something as important as the environmental protection of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, on the surface this Bill looks innocuous; it looks like there are very few implications to the changes. But as I indicated, the devil's always in the detail, and, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a great deal of detail here. What we have is the responsibility of what used to be the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund being placed in a new advisory council, Mr. Speaker, including greater responsibility for the fund's finances, Mr. Speaker, what the money can be used for. And that leaves implications for the stability of the fund in the long run, Mr. Speaker. It leaves questions about who the fund is accountable to, Mr. Speaker. Does it still remain totally accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Those are all questions that are important to the people of this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to discredit in any way anybody that would be appointed to this advisory council. I believe people who are appointed to these councils or to the wildlife fund have the absolute best interest of the people of Saskatchewan in their interests. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't have that same level of accountability as members of this Assembly do, because ultimately the responsibility for the protection of our environment and our wildlife habitat and our wildlife itself rests with the legislature of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, those elected to have that responsibility, Mr. Speaker, not advisory boards or councils.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the organizations that receive support from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund do valuable work in our province, and none of us are going to question the valuable work those organizations have done and continue to do, Mr. Speaker, and we expect will do into the future. That's not what's at question here. What's at question is: where should the role start and end, where should the responsibility lie, and who has the final accountability, Mr. Speaker? And I think that final accountability should be clearly defined.

Mr. Speaker, a year ago, as I indicated a few minutes ago, we

were dealing with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, and I can tell you many in the province, many in the province including our First Nations, were not in favour of removing the wildlife habitat from legislation, Mr. Speaker. The protection of that wildlife habitat from legislation was important to the people of this province. It had been protected by legislation for about 30 years prior to this change, Mr. Speaker.

And actually the concept came into being under a Conservative government in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, Colin, I believe it was Colin Maxwell was the minister responsible at the time who put in place the concept or premise that we would protect habitat land through legislation in such a way that we'd set aside reserves of land so future generations, our children and grandchildren, can enjoy the same beautiful, pristine environment that you and I had the opportunity to see when we were children, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, over the years that land has been protected until a year ago. And now it's been removed from legislation, and its protection is no longer the subject of debate in this Assembly before changes can be made. And that was an important step. Now some could say it's wasted time and it doesn't . . . It has implications that delays changes, Mr. Speaker. And yes, it does. Clearly democracy takes time. But there's a reason that it was protected. It was protected for future generations. It was protected for our children and grandchildren.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* there are implications to changing the scope of the responsibilities of the advisory council, of the fund itself, what can be charged to the fund, what can be paid out of the fund, Mr. Speaker. It has implications dealing with the stability of the fund. It has implications dealing with the longevity of the fund, Mr. Speaker.

The fund has traditionally been there to restock the fisheries, Mr. Speaker, and to protect wildlife in our province, Mr. Speaker. It is funded by fishing licences and hunting licences, Mr. Speaker. Those who use, users of those services paid for the fund, Mr. Speaker, and the fund was used to ensure that there was a plentiful supply of wildlife and fish, fisheries, Mr. Speaker, in which future generations would have the same opportunities to be involved in the activities of fishing and hunting that we currently have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the changes can have implications on future levels of angling and hunting, Mr. Speaker, whether or not the sufficient amounts of funds are available to continue with the restocking at appropriate levels in lakes across the province, Mr. Speaker, or whether or not there's adequate species out there to hunt in various areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. Those things can change over time. And so there may be fewer licences sold and less money going into the fund, Mr. Speaker. So if you drain more money out of the fund, which was designed originally for one purpose, Mr. Speaker, and allow it to be used for much broader purposes, Mr. Speaker, does in fact the fund deplete itself over time? And does that then put at risk, does that put at risk, Mr. Speaker, the future restocking of lakes, Mr. Speaker, the future wildlife management of our province? And I think those are things that need to be considered.

Mr. Speaker, the activities seem to be continuing to grow. Both

angling and hunting are growing. Then the scope of what's available will grow as well, Mr. Speaker. But if we have a downturn in the activities of angling and hunting, Mr. Speaker, and we have less funds going into the fund over time, Mr. Speaker, then we're going to have a problem, particularly if we're spending the reserves today for purposes other than what they were intended to when the fund was put in place.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility as the members of the legislature to ensure the long-term prosperity of those resources for future generations, Mr. Speaker, and for those who use, Mr. Speaker, these resources as a way of life as well, Mr. Speaker. Many of our First Nations and Métis people in northern Saskatchewan, fishing, hunting, and living off trapping, Mr. Speaker, is fundamental to their way of life. And, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that we are protecting, we are protecting those resources for future generations in the North as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, responsible management of our resources is a responsibility of government. It's important that we not deplete funds by allowing diversion of funds from the wildlife habitat fund to other purposes, Mr. Speaker, without close examination.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also concerned any time we see a reduction in accountability of government and less transparency. As we move the accountability and transparency one level away from the government directly, Mr. Speaker, then it becomes less transparent, Mr. Speaker. Members of this Assembly have less opportunity and ability to directly see where those funds are, Mr. Speaker, how they're being spent on a yearly basis, and to question the spending of those funds.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important, very, very important, that we continue to have the level of accountability, a greater level of transparency and openness around these funds, Mr. Speaker, so that we can in fact exercise the rights to ensure that we are going to provide for future generations the same level of wildlife protection, wildlife habitat, Mr. Speaker, and wildlife species for those generations and children, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the changes are going to give additional authority to the advisory council to determine how the funds are spent, Mr. Speaker, including how much remuneration and expenses will be paid to those who sit on the advisory council, Mr. Speaker. Those are things that traditionally in the past were set by government. Now it's going to be set by a body itself that has control of the fund, Mr. Speaker — money, by the way, that is coming through the Government of Saskatchewan. It's taxpayer-funded, Mr. Speaker, funded by the people of Saskatchewan through those angling licences and hunting licences.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not in the least trying to say that these people who'd be on the advisory council are anything but dedicated to the purpose of which the advisory council is being put in place for. So, Mr. Speaker, it's one step removed from the current level of accountability. It's one step removed from the accountability of government, and one step removed from the accountability of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, and that concerns me. It concerns me because this is public dollars, Mr. Speaker, and transparency and accountability of public dollars

is absolutely important, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we as members of the legislature were elected by the people of Saskatchewan to represent them on these types of issues. We're there to make the decisions on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And it's our responsibility to be accountable to how government money is spent on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, everything we do should increase accountability and transparency, Mr. Speaker. It shouldn't decrease accountability and transparency by moving it further away from the decision makers, Mr. Speaker, the people who in fact have that accountability and responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, in fact the current government will have an opportunity before the end of this session to deal with the issue of accountability and transparency on all contracts, leases and, Mr. Speaker, agreements that would be entered in upon by the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, by the government.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition today, at first reading of a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that's all about openness, accountability, and transparency, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation would in fact make it so that any member of this Assembly can get any contract the government enters into so that the official opposition could hold the government accountable for its actions and how it spends money on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So the people of Saskatchewan can have a much greater opportunity to see how the government is spending money, Mr. Speaker, and to hold the government accountable for spending money in a manner in which the people of Saskatchewan would want it spent, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily just the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So today people in this province are wanting, as they are across the country, Mr. Speaker, greater openness and transparency, less secrecy from government. They want to know what their government is doing. They want to be able to understand what the government's doing on their behalf, Mr. Speaker, and how the government is spending their money. Because ultimately, Mr. Speaker, the government doesn't have money that doesn't belong to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. Governments don't have money that doesn't belong to the people of the province.

[16:15]

So, Mr. Speaker, when we're spending public money, when we're spending public money, Mr. Speaker, we have to be open, transparent, and accountable to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is moving forward with very important legislation, Mr. Speaker, to increase accountability, create openness . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — What is the House Leader's point of order?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are discussing Bill No. 155, *The Natural Resources Amendment Act*, not a private member's Bill that the member's just introduced. What is the relevance of the member's speech, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I recognize the member from P.A. Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — You can speak to the point of order.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Speaker will well know, with debates of these kind in the legislature when we're speaking to Bills, there is some degree of latitude that is allowed in these debates. In order to make a point that's relevant to the Bill, the member was getting around to making a point directly to this Bill with a short reference to another Bill that's before the House in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, something that's very appropriate and is done often. And I suspect that the Speaker will note that in his ruling. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I was listening very carefully to the speaker, to Regina Dewdney . . . to the member from Regina Dewdney, and I have to admit that yes, it was getting a little carried away going over onto the private member's Bill. So I would ask you to please stick to Bill 155, *The Natural Resources Amendment Act*.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about Bill 155, natural resources amendment Act, Mr. Speaker. And I was talking about in detail how the removal of responsibility to a third party, which was once a responsibility of government, delineates the responsibility of government, Mr. Speaker, and its accountability. I think that I've spoke for some time about that and talking about people's expectation for greater accountability, transparency, Mr. Speaker, and how we can deliver that in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we move forward on a very important piece of legislation that deals with the protection of our natural resources in our province, Mr. Speaker, the people expect the legislature and expect members of this legislature to keep control of certain responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, and not push it further away where there's less accountability, where we don't know, Mr. Speaker, to the same degree what is being done by an advisory council, Mr. Speaker, and when public funds are being expended in a less transparent way than they would have been in the past, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we look at Bill 155, as I said earlier, it looks like an innocuous Bill until you start getting into the detail, Mr. Speaker. And we see a change in the responsibilities of the current wildlife fund to an advisory council, Mr. Speaker. And any responsibility that the minister deems necessary can be transferred to that fund, Mr. Speaker, and that will include and does include transfer of employees, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding of this Bill would see the potential transfer of some employees that are currently employed in the Department of the Environment, Mr. Speaker, to be employed by an advisory council, Mr. Speaker, so that biologists that would have the responsibility of monitoring the species and fish in our lakes and in our forests and across our province, Mr. Speaker, would now be monitored by an advisory council where those employees doing that same monitoring in the past would have

been directly responsible to the ministry, directly responsible to the legislature, Mr. Speaker, the department, the minister, and ultimately then to this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

So removing that responsibility one level further out, Mr. Speaker, goes to my whole issue about accountability, transparency, Mr. Speaker. And I talked about how people of this province want us to be more open, more accountable, and more transparent, Mr. Speaker, not less.

And, Mr. Speaker, moving forward, particularly with the protection of the environment and our wildlife, Mr. Speaker, there are concerns. And these concerns need to be fully fleshed out and fully debated and fully talked about prior to moving forward with this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why would the government want to remove the responsibility of the protection of these species — fish and other forms of wildlife, Mr. Speaker — from direct government and have those biologists within an advisory council or employed by an advisory council, Mr. Speaker? Those are questions that need to be answered, Mr. Speaker.

Those are concerns that need to be examined in detail, Mr. Speaker, because the people of this province want to protect their wildlife. They want to protect their environmental habitat, Mr. Speaker, and they want to ensure that future generations, our children and grandchildren, have the opportunities that we had. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the responsibility of a government. It's a responsibility of the government to protect the environment, protect the habitat, and protect the wildlife species in our province, Mr. Speaker. And we need to take that responsibility seriously.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we're moving forward and examining what should be contained in legislation in this province, Mr. Speaker, and what should be passed off to third parties, Mr. Speaker, or pushed more distant from direct control of government, we need to understand whether or not, one, it's better; two, do the people want it; thirdly, Mr. Speaker, does it benefit the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if we're pushing or we're moving employees out of government departments because the Government of Saskatchewan of today picks a number out of the air and says they're going to reduce the civil service by 15 per cent over four years, so they start pushing employees into third party agencies that the Government of Saskatchewan still funds and pays, Mr. Speaker, well then that becomes a mug's game, or it becomes, you know, what's under cup number one, what's under cup number two, Mr. Speaker. The end result is the people of Saskatchewan are still financing that employment, Mr. Speaker, they're still expecting them to do a job.

And, Mr. Speaker, we need to understand that. We've seen this government make a promise to reduce the civil service by 15 per cent and then create a number of independent agencies they pushed employees to, Mr. Speaker. They're still being paid for by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're still, Mr. Speaker, there to carry out largely the exact same function, Mr. Speaker. But they pick an artificial number out of the air, Mr. Speaker, and then they try to live up to it.

Mr. Speaker, it's a mug's game. It doesn't change things. It doesn't make any real difference except they're trying to make the people of Saskatchewan believe one thing, when in reality it hasn't changed.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to understand that fully before we're prepared to look at moving this legislation forward, Mr. Speaker. It's legislation that isn't clear and transparent in what its final outcomes are going to be. It creates an advisory council without saying what the total role of that advisory council will be. It gives the ability of the minister to give additional responsibilities to that advisory council without coming to this legislature for debating what those are. It gives the advisory council the ability to spend money, Mr. Speaker, without coming back to this Assembly for approval, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that is money that has been set aside by the people of Saskatchewan through their government, Mr. Speaker, through their government for the protection of wildlife species in our province, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important for future generations and for future families that we have adequate opportunities for future generations to fish and trap and hunt in our province, Mr. Speaker, for those who do it recreationally, Mr. Speaker, but also for those who make a living doing it as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to understand that the outfitting and trapping industry in our province brings literally millions of dollars into our province, Mr. Speaker, through others who come to our province to take advantage of our great environmental opportunities, to take advantage of the beautiful lakes and forests that we have and the hunting opportunities we have, Mr. Speaker. It is an economy in itself, Mr. Speaker, where many, many communities and individuals make their living. Many communities benefit from the fact that people purchase their fishing equipment or they purchase food to go on hunting trips and their fishing trips, Mr. Speaker. Many northern communities benefit from the fact that we have the environmental opportunities or the wildlife opportunities we have in our province, Mr. Speaker.

So we need to ensure that we protect that, not just for those communities but for future generations, and that in everything we do, Mr. Speaker, we're looking towards protecting that for future generations.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I look at this particular Bill and I understand that literally, you know, 3 or \$4 million a year is spent just promoting hunting and fishing in our province, Mr. Speaker, just promoting it. And it brings great economic opportunity to our province, Mr. Speaker. And we need to ensure through our actions and activities through this fund, Mr. Speaker, that we are continuing to restock our lakes, that we are continuing to ensure that we have a vibrant and vital wildlife habitat in our province so that hunters and fishers continue to want to come to this province as well, Mr. Speaker, for its economic opportunity for those communities and for those outfitters and businesses that make their living through this activity, Mr. Speaker.

So there are many, many aspects to the changes that are being made and potential implications on various areas in our province, Mr. Speaker, both on the business side, both on the

environmental side, Mr. Speaker, and of course on the impact to future generations, our habitat, Mr. Speaker, and our wildlife species, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think I have several members who would like to speak on this Bill in the future, Mr. Speaker. This is an important issue. Our environment and our wildlife habitat and the wildlife species of our province, our people, are important to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And it is our responsibility to protect it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have to take that responsibility very seriously. We have to consider, prior to passing any legislation, what the impacts are on future generations, on our lakes and environment and on our habitat, Mr. Speaker, and on those businesses and the economy that comes from the opportunities that they present for the people of our province and for those individuals who are involved in the outfitting and the sale of products used in hunting, camping, and fishing in our province, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am at this time not prepared to pass this Bill to committee. I think it needs to have further examination by a number of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, prior to it going to committee, Mr. Speaker. So I think I need at this time to adjourn debate on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, to allow my colleagues in the future to have the opportunity to speak to this Bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate on Bill 155, *The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — Carried.

Bill No. 164

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert that **Bill No. 164** — *The Police Amendment Act, 2011* be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — I recognize the member from Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to follow the hon. member for Dewdney, only on a different Bill of course. I'm speaking to Bill 164, *An Act to amend The Police Act, 1990*.

And this Act, Mr. Speaker, we've only had three speakers on it so far, so it's fairly new to the Chamber for our ability to look at the Act, our ability to reach out and try and connect with people that are affected by this significant Bill. And I call it a significant Bill partly for some of the things that are in the Bill, that it purports to do or tries to do. But I call it a significant Bill, Mr. Speaker, because *The Police Act* . . . Well let me just describe it.

We have a municipal police Act that affects Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Corman Park, and the cities of

Estevan and Weyburn, and there's part of this Bill that will just unfold all of the rest, all of Saskatchewan. So we have literally thousands of police officers. When you take the municipal police forces that I listed here and then you add in the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] that are spoken to in this Act as well, we have literally thousands of active police officers that are affected by this very Bill, Bill 164.

And then you have to throw in a little bit of consideration for their spouses, their families because any time we're changing, potentially changing terms of employment — and I'll get to that later in my speech — but any time we're potentially changing employment or terms of employment, it affects not just the employee and employer. It affects the families, and it reaches out and affects the communities right across Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

So what I'm suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is this is a very significant Bill. It affects literally thousands of active police officers and then many more people that are involved in their families and friends. And it clearly is an issue for every municipality in Saskatchewan because municipalities have to deal with policing, in it's a responsibility to deal with policing in their municipalities, certainly the major centres that I described.

And I'll go through the list because I represent a Regina riding. I don't want anyone to get the impression that I just want to centre this around Regina or Saskatoon because there is also Estevan and there is Weyburn and there's Moose Jaw and there is Prince Albert and there is Corman Park. I hope I mentioned Prince Albert. But those are the centres that have their own police forces. And it's important that we . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I look forward, you know, Mr. Speaker, to government members standing and speaking to their own legislation, and I won't get involved in the sidebar conversation because I have some things that I do feel are important to say in this Bill, and I want to stay focused on that.

Every community, every community is involved in this, every single community, and every citizen is affected by this. Next to health, you know, health affects every citizen in the province, and I know that the Minister of Health understands that. Policing also affects every citizen in this province, and I know that the minister that sits right behind the Minister of Health understands that too because that minister introduced this Bill not very long ago in this very Chamber.

The Bill is significant in who it affects and who will be affected by it. But it's also significant, Mr. Speaker. There's 24 clauses. Many of our Bills are, some as simple as three clauses, some six, eight, ten clauses. This one's got 24 clauses in it, so it's not some relatively minor changes to the way that the policing will take place. It's significant changes.

We have the spectre in Saskatchewan of a government that has said they've done the consulting. They've said they've done the due diligence. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, we have to question that for two reasons. One, it's the job of the opposition to question whether the government has in fact done the consulting that they claim they have and to make certain that that consultation is adequate. That's part of our responsibility as Her Majesty's

Loyal Opposition.

But part of it too is we've had a little example earlier today in question period. We have the St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail community college where the government claimed to have done its due diligence, claimed to have done the consultation. And as that mystery unravels more and more, as that unravels more and more, it becomes apparent that the government's claims of having done its consultation, Mr. Speaker, have not happened.

If they missed it, if they missed it so badly in the St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail community college amalgamation that was being forced by the government, if they missed the consultation and they missed the warning signs so bad in that, it does not lend itself for us having confidence that Bill 164, *An Act to amend The Police Act*, has had the adequate consultation. If a government . . . once every time you misrepresent the accuracy of what actually happened, every time you misrepresent that, it takes away the credibility of all else that you try to do.

I recall as one of the very earliest stories I ever had, ever heard and ever learned, was the little boy that cried wolf. And I mean, we all know that fairy tale, the little boy that cried wolf, and it led to tragic, tragic end. Had the little boy simply told the truth at every point, at the critical juncture, people would have believed him and the day would have been saved.

So the consultation and the due diligence on this, frankly, we have to question whether it's adequate or not. I hope that it is as was portrayed by the government, that it's an adequate and a good consultation. We owe that to the police forces of Saskatchewan. We owe it to the municipalities and the ratepayers that fund it, the municipalities that look after the administrivia of it and making sure that the police forces are paid for and that they're properly adjudicated. We owe that to all of those, and we certainly owe it to the population of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We owe it to make sure that that due diligence was done. We owe it to make sure that the consultation was done.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill itself, Bill 164, has some things that we're told, on the surface, we're told are good changes. And there is always some good and often a bit of bad with the good. And by that, I want to just pick up on one of the little . . . I shouldn't say little. It's a significant thing. It's we're told that the potential cost is upward of \$100,000 which could . . . you know, when it's spent here, it's not available to be spent somewhere else because governance, governing is all about choices.

Mr. Speaker, the costs of investigations when there is a complaint against a police force or against an officer or a police chief or, you know, a complaint against the force, much of those costs are currently picked up by the municipality that is responsible for that police force. This Act removes a significant part of that cost and puts the burden on the provincial government, and that's not entirely a bad thing. Where it runs into what we have to guard against is we have to guard against removing responsibility to try and make sure that your police force is properly run and properly governed and that things are being done lawfully and carefully and adequately. That is, we have to make sure we have the proper governance of all of our

police forces.

If we don't, the risk that we have by the provincial government picking up an increasing part of the tab for investigations into complaints, the downside of that is there is less reason for a police force or a local municipality to even worry about it. Who cares how many complaints there are? The provincial government will fund, massively fund the majority of the cost of investigations. So there's less responsibility to make sure that your police force is adequately governed and adequately operated in your own municipality.

The same can be said for the mediation services. The one typically will lead to the other. Once you're finished with the investigation part, then you have to somehow square the situation with the complainant on the one hand and the police force on the other hand. You have to somehow get the complainant and the police force to agree to a go-forward position because it's just untenable otherwise. It's not good for the complainant. Before somebody complains, they should feel legitimately that they have a real concern.

So you want to address those concerns. It isn't something that, I think, people, individuals would take lightly to complain about a police force or a police officer or a police chief. It would be something that an individual would feel typically powerless when they're making the complaint. So they'd want that complaint, if they had the courage — I'll describe it that way — to make the complaint formally, they would expect that it would be dealt with in an adequate way. And they deserve then, at minimum after the investigation, a proper mediation so that they're not left out all on their own, that they understand what happened in its entirety, and that they're accepting and able to accept not only what happened, but how that policing will go forward in the future because often, quite frankly, there is lessons to be learned, either by an individual police officer, police force, what have you.

Police do a tremendous job every minute of every hour of every day throughout Saskatchewan. Our police forces just really do a tremendous job. But they're not perfect. And they're no more perfect, Mr. Speaker, than certainly I am or anyone I know. I just don't know anyone that is absolutely perfect. I can't involve the Speaker or else I would say with the exception of but, Mr. Speaker, this is the reality of our lives.

So it's a double-edged sword when the province decides its going to pick up some of the increasing amounts of cost of the investigations and the mediation, and we would want to make sure that part of our consultation made sure that it's reaching an appropriate level of payment by the province and an appropriate level of responsibility of the police force involved.

It's much like the education system where none of us want to pay education property tax, but we want to have the responsibility to elect a local school board. It's the same principle. If you don't pay any taxes to a local school board, why do you have the right to elect them, you know? And that's the same principle that I would see with the amendments to *The Police Act*.

The Act, one of the very positive things it does is it allows now or says that the reporting of items under *The Police Act* must

now go to two ministries, one of course being Justice, where it has always gone, and the other one being Corrections, Public Safety. And that's appropriate with the current alignment that the Sask Party government has for division of responsibilities.

And I know that at any point in the future, whether it's next week, next year, 10 years from now, or at some point in the future, government will realign itself again. We just know that. That's the way things operate. And when that realignment takes place, we'll have an amendment to the Act because instead of there being Public Safety and Corrections and Justice, we might have a third ministry involved. Or maybe it's reduced to just one ministry. And at that point we would, we would be able to make that work and make sense of it, Mr. Speaker.

The question that troubles me the most in this Bill is the removal of a cap that previously there was a population cap of 20,000 people where, when your population got over 20,000, you had a responsibility to set up your own police force. That's now removed.

Now under this Act what can happen is, for example, the RM of Regina could collapse its police force and ask the RCMP, enter into a contract with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to take over the policing of Regina. The same could happen in Prince Albert or Moose Jaw or Corman Park, Weyburn, Estevan, Saskatoon. I hope I mention P.A. again. I'm sure I did. I think P.A. is getting double mention in my speech, Mr. Speaker. But any one of these municipalities could collapse their police force, their existing police force and enter into a contract with the RCMP.

[16:45]

And what troubles me about this is it begs the question of, what municipality asked the Sask Party government for this amendment? What municipality is having difficulty with its, so much difficulty with its police force that they need this bigger stick for the next round of collective bargaining, this bigger stick that says, it's our way or the highway? It's our way, or we'll bring in the RCM Police, and you'll be unemployed. You will not have a municipal police force.

Now it leads to speculation. And we all know that Saskatoon has had some difficulty in recent years. And I'm wondering, is it that Saskatoon is looking at having that big stick for collective bargaining, Mr. Speaker? Is that why the change from 20,000 and the elimination of that 20,000 population cap, so that literally anywhere, any municipality can invite the RCMP to take over the policing?

Who asked for it? It was absent. Who asked for it was totally absent in the second reading speech by the minister. No mention at all of who might have requested this change.

But I have a profound respect and have had for all of my working life, a profound respect for collective bargaining. And this doesn't sit well because this one, in the absence of a better . . . of an explanation from the government, in an absence of an explanation, Mr. Speaker, this just looks like it's designed to undermine collective bargaining.

You might ask, why is it that the member for Regina

Coronation Park has those doubts? Well we don't need to go very far. We can go to the last session of the legislature when there was some draconian legislation introduced that set up essential services by the Sask Party, essential services.

And as an example, as an example, in some hospital settings under the legislation that talks of essential services, we could actually have in a strike situation, we have to, by law that was passed, have more people working in the hospital during a strike than are working there today. Imagine that. This level of employment, of numbers of workers, is safe and it's good today, but as soon as you have a strike, you've got to have more people showing up. How do you have a strike? How can you have collective bargaining when you're not just one hand but I mean you're just tied right up?

I'm not advocating strike, Mr. Speaker. I'm saying that the police forces deserve the right to have fair collective bargaining. As we said all along, that public servants, hospital workers deserve the right to have fair and open and honest collective bargaining. It doesn't mean that every side is always happy. We know from, I know from 16 years experience in government that's not what happens. It doesn't matter how good a collective agreement is; some people will say it's not good enough. But that's the way it works. At least you have the opportunity to have an open dialogue. And workers have the opportunity to take job action that is legitimate and that is meaningful and that, quite frankly, disrupts things for the employer. Why do you have that? You have it, Mr. Speaker, so that you have some equalness at the bargaining table.

And I know many people say, oh well, you know, the golden rule — whoever's got the gold rules. And if you don't want to work, you know, put in its simplicity, if you don't want to work for me for \$10 an hour, well don't work. You know, and I guess there's some legitimacy to that argument. But people enter into careers. You train to enter into whatever career it is. In a hospital . . . You train greatly to enter into policing. It's difficult enough to get into a police force. You don't go through all of that training and find yourself with 12 or 14 or some other number of years service in a police force, Mr. Speaker, and then say, oh I don't like that collective agreement so I'm going to leave. You just don't do that. You try and negotiate a fair collective agreement, one that you can hold your head up and say, I'm a member of this community. I'm respected. I'm appreciated. And you know what? My employer appreciates the job I'm doing.

That's the best world of all is when you have a willing employer, willing employee, and going out and every day trying to do the job as best we can. And that's what the majority of Saskatchewan people do day after day is we get up and we try and do our job as best we can. But this removal of the 20,000 person cap, the population cap, really fundamentally changes the collective bargaining strength and the situation.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I think this Bill quite frankly should not go forward until the government can explain what it is they're driving at with clause . . . I just want to make sure it's clause 4. Let me read clause 4 and that'll help me make sure that that's the clause I wanted to speak to:

“(1) Subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in

Council, a municipality having a population greater than the minimum size prescribed in the regulations may enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada to employ and pay for a sufficient number of members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to provide policing services within the . . . [community]”.

And that's what section 23 amended, clause 4, reads in the proposed Bill. And that's, there's no adequate explanation of that, and quite frankly I don't think there's, if there's . . . If there was consultation done around that cap, it would be most interesting to find out which municipalities, if any, asked for that, that change. Is it something driven by a right wing Sask Party ideology? Or is it something that is being asked for, Mr. Speaker, by a municipality? It's one of the two. Maybe it's both. Maybe it's both. But we have no explanation of it whatsoever, and so clause 4 is just totally unacceptable to us because of that.

Mr. Speaker, I never got to the section 55 amended. And it is, and I'll quote from that:

“(1.1) If an allegation of misconduct by a chief is made to the board by a member, any disclosure of information for the purposes of that allegation does not constitute an offence for which the member may be disciplined pursuant to this Act or the regulations, unless it is determined that the allegation is:

(a) trivial, frivolous or vexatious; or

(b) unfounded and made in bad faith”.

Mr. Speaker, I read that, and I'll tell you it takes one brave police officer to bring a complaint against his or her own police chief. You are really, really — despite what may be the best of intentions — you are really, really at a disadvantage. In a municipal police force, promotions all will go through the chief of police. It might be recommendations come up there, but promotions that affect pay, that affect, you know, all sorts of things come through the chief of police.

And I can just imagine, you know, if — I'll pick on my seatmate — just if my seatmate were the chief of police and I was a police officer, and I had a legitimate complaint and I raised it, I can just see how far I would go in the future. So it is really a tough, tough piece of legislation that is required. And this is not even close, in my opinion, to tough enough.

None of us want to have a frivolous or a vexatious allegation made against us. If I were a chief of police, I would not want a frivolous or vexatious accusation made against me. But I would want to have my police force know that if they're convinced that I'm doing something wrong, they can blow the whistle. I would want that. I would want that. And I think that that would be a position that police chiefs unanimously would take.

What it requires is a maturity of all to know that even though I may be chief of police, I am not, I am not infallible. I may make a mistake. And, Mr. Speaker, I may unknowingly make a mistake. And so if someone brings a complaint against me, I should be able to learn from it.

And you know what? If the police officer's been harmed through missing a promotion or, you know, I mean pick your circumstance, part of it should be trying to make them whole again. At no point should the chief of police ever be able, in a position, to go after that police officer unless it is just clearly a personal vendetta by the police officer and clearly no other agenda at all other than to create trouble.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see this section 55 amended, and I point out in my opinion this is a totally inadequate protection. My note on the Bill is, not much protection here. And that's my note that I put on my copy of the Bill: not much protection here; whistleblower protection that is inadequate and that does not do what might have been the intent of this legislation. I absolutely say that might have been the intent of the legislation. But it does not go far enough because of the power situation that exists in particularly in a policing organization. There is just no question that it is very hierarchical and everything flows downhill. And so the whistle-blower protection is totally inadequate.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has more than its share of problems. Bill 164, the Act to amend *The Police Act*, has plenty of things that clearly need to be better explained. Clearly if not just better explained they need to, they need to be changed. We need the whistle-blower strengthened. We need a clear explanation of the 20,000 cap in population. We need all kinds of . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bradshaw): — The time now being 5 o'clock, this Assembly stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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